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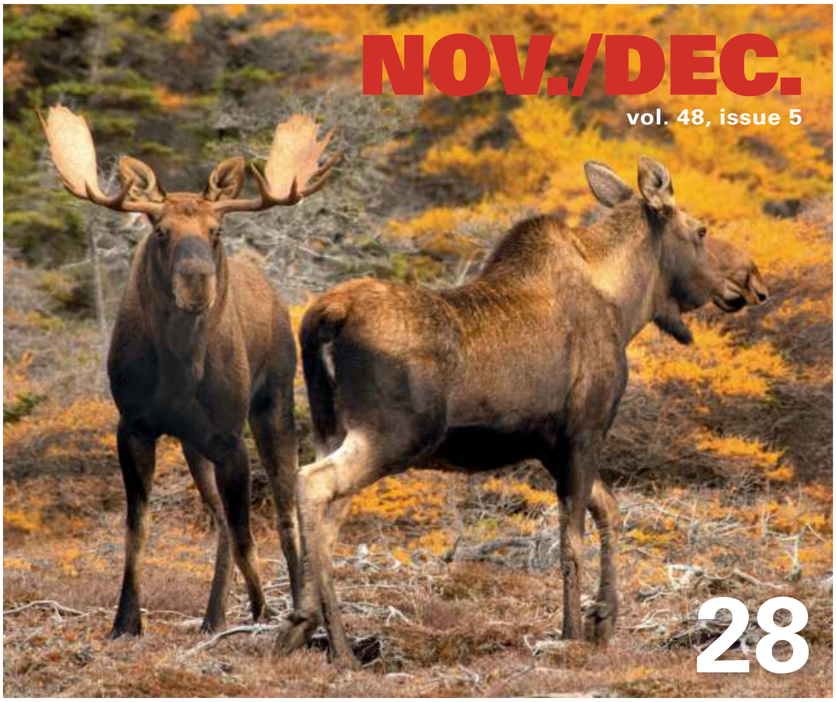
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DEPARTMENTS & COLUMNS









COVER LINES



COVER SHOT RESPONDING TO A COW CALL, A HUGE RUTTING BULL MOOSE STEPS OUT FROM THE AUTUMN WILLOWS IN THE SOUTHERN YUKON. PHOTO BY ANDREW RAYCROFT

FEATURES















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Best waterfowl hunts

Along with our relatively small population, this country is blessed with an abundance of land and water—the ideal recipe for healthy duck and goose populations. Of course, that also makes for outstanding waterfowl hunting, from the Pacific coast to the Atlantic shore to the Arctic barrens. And with 30 species of ducks and geese to choose from, the opportunities are near endless. Here are some of the best hunts out there.
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HUNTING



SPOT-AND-STALK MOOSE
Forget calling and waiting for that big bull to show up. For an exciting change-up, try spotting and stalking instead. Here's what you need to know about gear, stalking strategies and more.
outdoorcanada.ca/spotandstalkmoose

DECOYING DEER
Whitetails are often timid, but decoys give them the confidence that all is well, overriding their innate fear of exposed places. These five expert decoying tips will help you lure wary deer into range.
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LATE-SEASON ELK
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FISHING



FALL MUSKIES
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RETIREMENT ROLE

Re Phil Morlock's "sort of" retirement ("The defender," Hunting Special, *Outdoor Canada East*). I once saw an interview with Steve Smith (you know, Red Green) in which he stated you don't retire from something—you retire *to* something. It sounds like Mr. Morlock has done exactly that. And kudos to him for working on a children's book to pass along his outdoor passions. We all need to work with the next generations to ensure the continuation of a very important way of life. Keep up the good work *Outdoor Canada*.

TOM MILLER
GREENHILL, NOVA SCOTIA

FIREARMS FACTS

I am writing in response to the letter by Albert Plamondon ("Dispatches," Hunting Special). He says he's deeply disappointed about the editor's note "On guard" and the guest column "Gun ploy" (July/August), and would like to see the other side of the debate about firearms. I don't believe that would help Albert because it is quite obvious he is ignorant of the issues already. He is comparing Canada to the U.S. in terms of gun laws, which is like comparing apples to elephants. We have the National Firearms Association (not the National Rifle Association), and it is *not* trying to liberalize our gun laws. It is trying to keep what we have, which has been working. As for Albert's statement about the sale of guns to children, I have no idea where he came up with that.

The issue is with the Order-in-Council, which now bans as many as 2,300 firearms due to the very vague definitions of some guns. Albert indicates it does not affect hunters. Well, if you own a 10-gauge shotgun, it is now banned, as are some 12-gauge shotguns. That does affect hunters and shooters, while doing nothing to deal with the root of the problems—gang and drug violence, and unstable people who are slipping under the radar or simply ignored by the authorities. If Albert would like the facts, he should pull his head out of the sand and quit watching American news.

GARY VIESER
MOOSE JAW, SASKATCHEWAN

RESOURCE REASONING

I find Kevin Van Tighem's call to arms against mining, logging and agricultural companies destructive to mankind ("Combat biology," Hunting Special, *Outdoor Canada West*). If it weren't for mining, you would have no ore and no metals, which means no cars, no guns, no bullets, no tools, no utensils and no fishing reels. If it weren't for loggers, you'd have no paper, no lumber to build your homes, no wood for gunstocks, no furniture and no cardboard. And if it weren't for agriculture, you would have no fruit, no meat, no bread, no beer and no whisky.

To call these industries "single-minded" is absurd. They feed the families of the world, and make life easier for everyone. I have been an avid hunter since I was 10 years old. I have also logged for 40 years—my family has



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logged and farmed for three generations in southeastern Manitoba, supporting many families and businesses in our community. Wildlife is abundant here, and many people visit to hunt and fish, even though those industries are present. To badmouth development and growth is single-minded, considering all the red tape these companies must go through to support people with jobs.

BRONKO HOVORKA
SPRAGUE, MANITOBA

Kevin Van Tighem replies: Mr. Hovorka sets up a false choice—all or nothing. Of course we need mining, logging and agriculture. And we also need conservation and restraint. They are not, and should not be, mutually exclusive. But when woodland caribou are at risk across Canada, native trout populations are threatened and songbird populations are crashing, it should be obvious to even the most passionate defender of resource sector jobs that the path to balance has to mean less exploitation and more care—not the opposite.



BAIT BEEF

I read the article about muskie-fishing lures hoping to find some insight ("Giant slayers," Hunting Special). I was mildly disappointed it didn't mention any of the muskie baits my family uses on northwestern Ontario's Dryberry Lake. Muskies on that lake have been caught almost exclusively with a—get ready to laugh—fully dressed #3 Mepps Aglia. You won't catch them on any of the large baits mentioned in the article.

KEN PETERS
WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

RIFLE REFLECTION

Re Scott MacDonald's question in Guns & Ammo (May/June). Those Martini-action rifles were on the surplus market around 1960. They fired a black-powder cartridge of about .45 calibre, and had polygonal rifling (it's very hard to see, even in a larger-bore gun). Those guns were replaced by the Enfields. The rifle shown is much cleaner than any I've ever seen. Since it has a bead front and no rear sight, I believe it was a range gun. The number one law of combat—in your range, but out of theirs—meant big guns, mortars and many snipers. To find and train snipers meant fitting good guns with tall, tang-mounted, flip-up aperture sights. Those sights were likely saved and rebuilt, prior to surplus, for the Enfield range guns.

EDWARD RICHE
ST. CATHARINES, ONTARIO

WEBSITE WHOOPSIES

In our roundup of new fishing kayaks ("Ultimate fishing machines," July/August), we inadvertently provided the incorrect web addresses for Old Town (www.oldtowncanoe.com) and Bonafide Kayaks (bonafidekayaks.com). And in our ATV buyer's guide ("For the land," May/June), the web address for Honda Canada's ATV page should have been atvsxs.honda.ca/atv. Our apologies for any confusion.







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BY PATRICK WALSH

Climate reminder



TWO READERS RECENTLY accused me of "virtue signalling," owing to my belief that humans must wean themselves off of fossil fuels. I've long been arguing in these pages that it's imperative to develop sustainable clean energy alternatives to at least mitigate the damaging effects of anthropogenic climate change. At the same time, I have also long maintained we must ensure that Canadians who depend on the oil and natural gas sectors for their livelihoods are not left behind economically, and are instead integrated into the solutions.

Anyway, I looked up "virtual signalling" on the internet. This is what Wikipedia told me it means: "Virtue signalling is a pejorative neologism for the conspicuous expression of moral values." Translation? A shiny new phrase people use if they can't tolerate others supporting something that contradicts their particular world view. Oh, I know I won't change the minds of those who already believe climate change is nothing more than a fantasy invented by some nefarious scientific cabal seeking to enrich itself. That's why the environmental cognoscenti among us in the outdoor community, who know that's complete garbage, are largely remaining silent—or at best tempering their comments to appease the oil-blinded among us. But I cannot.

Since early spring, COVID-19 has taken over the news cycle, and for good reason—it is hammering the economy while either killing people or making them gravely ill, both here at home and around the world. I am confident this pandemic will be conquered, however, and we will eventually be able to say goodbye to face masks and social distancing. Climate change, however, isn't going away. It remains the biggest threat humankind has ever faced. It is also wreaking havoc on our fish and game. Let's not forget that, and instead keep the pressure on our elected officials to double down on efforts to address this dire problem. Otherwise, we'll need much, much more than hand sanitizer to remain safe and healthy in the years to come, let alone continue to enjoy the outdoors. OC

CONTRIBUTORS



A kindergarten teacher from Toronto, **Craig Mitchell** first started hunting in 2016 and has since wholeheartedly embraced the sport. In this issue's guest opinion column (see "New blood" on page 22) he explores "adult onset hunting," and why veteran hunters should embrace newcomers such as him.



Calgary illustrator **Dave Whamond**'s offbeat and often hilarious work has appeared in publications ranging from *Reader's Digest* and *Sports Illustrated* to the *Washington Post* and *Wall Street Journal*. In "The dirty dozen" (page 50), he cleverly depicts 12 of the most common errors duck hunters should avoid.



On page 66, longtime contributor **George Gruenefeld** pays tribute to the trail home after a day afield. When he isn't fishing or hunting, you'll find the Kamloops, B.C., outdoorsman working on his latest project—an extensive online database of apple varieties from around the world (see www.pomiferous.com).



A multiple National Magazine Award winner, wildlife photographer and writer **Mark Raycroft** is as adept with a rifle and bow as he is with a camera and keyboard. In "Big game, big decision" (page 28), he presents 12 different big-game hunting scenarios and asks you, the reader, whether you would take the shot.



JOURNAL

OUTDOOR INFORMATION & INSPIRATION



NUMBERS GAME

28%
Increase in resident applications to hunt big game in the Yukon this fall. Officials suggest the spike is due to people looking to stock up and stay busy during the COVID-19 lockdown.



$1.8 million
First round of funding from Manitoba's Conservation Trust to help 19 organizations working to rehabilitate ecosystems and boost carbon sequestration to combat climate change. Another $5.4 million in funding will come from private donors.

15 Daily bag limit during Ontario's new double-crested cormorant hunt, which began in September and ends December 31. Hunters are not expected to eat the birds, which have been blamed for harming fish stocks and ecosystems.





SCENE

How do you like me now? As though he's hoping to impress the ladies, a rutting bull moose adds a sprig of Yukon foliage to his rack after thrashing a nearby willow shrub.

PHOTO BY ANDREW RAYCROFT

4 Days Inuit actor and caribou hunter Robert Joamie spent lost and without food in polar bear country earlier this fall near Pangnirtung, Nunavut. He was eventually spotted on a mountaintop and rescued by helicopter.

800



Activists at mid-September's rally on Parliament Hill to protest Ottawa's ban on modern sporting rifles, according to federal security officials. The Canadian Coalition for Firearm Rights says thousands were in attendance.

ON THE RECORD



"It's absolutely bonkers to endanger this beautiful place during a worldwide oil glut."

—**Kristen Monsell**, a senior attorney with the U.S.-based Center for Biological Diversity, blasts the Trump administration's plan to allow oil exploration in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The area is the calving grounds for the Porcupine caribou herd, which migrates through the Yukon and N.W.T.





OUTDOOR SMARTS

FIRST-AID MUSTS

THE ESSENTIALS FOR TREATING ILLNESSES AND INJURIES IN THE FIELD

BY SCOTT GARDNER

NO MATTER HOW careful you try to be, outdoor adventure comes with some measure of risk. We do our best to reduce it, but if you spend enough time outside, it's almost inevitable that you or someone you're with will get hurt or sick. That's why it's wise to always keep a simple first-aid kit in your pack, boat or cabin. There are many store-bought options available that include most of what you're likely to need, but making your own kit lets you customize the contents to your specific requirements.

Label each item (or category of item, such as pills) in its own clear, sealable bag, so you easily locate and access what you need in an emergency. Also make sure your first-aid kit itself is clearly labelled and easy to find in case you need the assistance of a helpful stranger. You can even make your kit modular, adding items you might want when going deep into the backcountry, or removing things you're unlikely to need on a day trip. However compact or comprehensive you make your kit, here are 12 items you should always include.

1. A few tablets each of ibuprofen for reducing inflammation, acetaminophen for pain relief and fever reduction, and aspirin for a heart attack.
2. Allergy pills for reducing allergic reactions.
3. Anti-diarrheal medication and water-soluble electrolyte powder or tablets to prevent dehydration.
4. Personal prescription medicines (bring extra in case your return is delayed).
5. Antiseptic wipes for cleaning minor wounds.
6. Antibiotic ointment to help prevent the infection of minor wounds.
7. Pressure bandage with a sewn-in, non-adhesive pad to help staunch hemorrhagic bleeding.
8. Compact roll of high-quality gauze to stop bleeding and help prevent infection.
9. Adhesive bandages, including wound closure strips (butterfly bandages), and specialty shapes for fingers and knuckles.
10. Emergency survival blanket to warm up victims of shock or hypothermia.
11. Tweezers to remove ticks or clean debris from wounds.
12. Compact first-aid manual or smartphone app (as long as it's available offline)—in an emergency, you medical need facts, not myths. OC

IN SEASON

CANADA GEESE



Canada geese become increasingly difficult to fool as the fall hunting season progresses, meaning you have to switch up your tactics. The key? Scout more, and hunt less. Spotting becomes more important as food sources dwindle and the geese become more and more wary. Watch a field twice before hunting it to ensure the birds really want to be there. If they feed there both times, you can be all but assured they'll return. Set your blind downwind and to the side of your decoy spread, avoiding the straight-on approach of earlier hunts; the later it is in the season, the farther downwind you should place your blind. When it comes to late-season decoy spreads, I'm an advocate of more is better. This is when full-bodied decoys pay for themselves, so put out as many as you can afford.

—KEN BAILEY



SMALLMOUTH BASS

As fall progresses, late-season smallmouth bass will creep ever closer to the outer rims of structures such as submerged points and rocky reefs, preparing to slide down into the main-lake basin and spend the winter in a state of torpor. Being social creatures by nature, the bass will also bunch up in large numbers, so always search for them first using your sonar screen before dropping down your electric trolling motor. A great fall strategy for this scenario is to present a soft-plastic minnow, worm or creature bait on a drop-shot rig. Keep your weight and hook a short distance apart—about a foot is usually just right—and don't overwork the bait. With the weight on bottom, simply shake the line ever so gently, then pause. On most days, in fact, late-season smallies don't want the bait moved at all.

—GORD PYZER

MANUFACTURERS (FIRST-AID KIT); KEN BAILEY (GEESE); GORD PYZER (BASS)

TROPHY WALL

HOT SHOTS

PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORIES OF FUN DAYS AFIELD AND ON THE WATER

WE ENJOY SEEING pictures of your fishing and hunting accomplishments—and learning the stories behind them. Please e-mail us your images, along with any relevant details (who, what, where and when), and we'll post them on Instagram and publish our favourites here.



Brampton, Ontario's Emily Wright and dad Matt Wright are all smiles after Emily caught her second smallmouth bass on July 31. The three-year-old was drop-shotting a wacky-rigged Senko on a 30-inch kiddie rod when she landed the fish. Says Matt: "I'm not sure which one of us was more excited!"



Saskatoon's Tim Shirkey says he's "super proud" of his eight-year-old son, Harrison, for catching this 28-inch walleye in mid-May. The youngster caught the fish at Etter's Beach on Last Mountain Lake, Saskatchewan, while casting a Len Thompson Orange & Black. Nicely done, Harrison!



Proud grandpa Fred Albers sent us this photo of his 22-month-old grandson, Tristan Albers, backing up dad Anthony on a successful whitetail hunt last November near Quebec's Lac Tremblant. "Notice the field glasses in Tristan's hands," says Fred. "Could we call this his first deer?" Sure can!

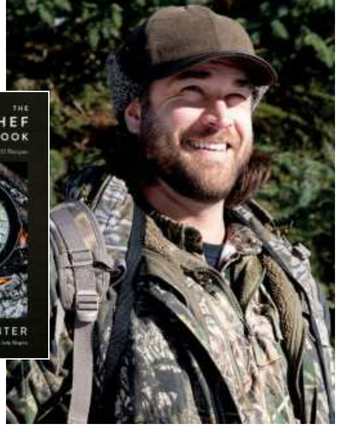


Caitlin Wilson submitted this picture of her husband, Joel Wilson, and his best pal, Annie, following a productive ruffed grouse shoot near Nestor Falls, Ontario—just in time for dinner last Thanksgiving. "We have lots to be grateful for here!" Caitlin says. OC

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HUNTER AND HIS NEW BOOK





CUISINE

HUNTER CHEF

SHARING TWIN PASSIONS FOR FOOD AND THE OUTDOORS

BY SCOTT GARDNER

"I **AM A HUNTER** by name and by nature. And I'm a chef by training," Michael Hunter writes in the opening pages of *The Hunter Chef Cookbook*. "It's only natural that those two worlds would come together." And so they have, first through his acclaimed Toronto eatery, the Antler Kitchen & Bar, and now through his new 300-page cookbook. It features more than 100 recipes for all manner of Canadian fish and game, as well as recipes for desserts and cocktails using wild and foraged ingredients, complete with sumptuous photos.

Thirty-six-year-old Hunter started working in restaurant kitchens as a teenager. At age 18, he had just enrolled in chef school when he had a moment of revelation after a family friend took him turkey hunting. Though Hunter grew up as an outdoorsy kid in rural Ontario, that outing was his first time hunting. It was also the first time he ate fresh wild turkey, and something clicked. "I was totally floored at how much better it tasted than farmed turkey," he says. "I felt like I'd eaten turkey for the first time, and that it was *real* food."

Today an experienced outdoorsman, Hunter is both co-owner and chef at Antler, which specializes in wild game such as bison, venison, rabbit and duck (the kitchen staff even wear aprons in Mossy Oak camo). He says his ongoing mission is twofold: introduce urbanites to wild flavours, while showing hunters some new cooking tricks. Take deer neck, for example, which is one of his favourite cuts. "In a slow and gentle braise, it's really succulent," he says, "but a lot of people grind it or feed it to the dog." Similarly, he says many hunters still discard duck, goose and turkey legs, not realizing they make incredible stews.

"In my experience, outdoorsmen are usually really excited to try something different," Hunter says. "So I get a lot of joy from showing old-school hunters other things they can do with their harvest." OC

[VISIT WWW.THEHUNTERCHEF.COM FOR MORE ON HUNTER'S BOOK, AND WWW.ANTLERKITCHENBAR.COM FOR DETAILS ON HIS RESTAURANT.]

MILESTONE

HISTORIC WIN

A FISHING FIRST FOR CANADIAN BASS PRO CHRIS JOHNSTON

BY BOB SEXTON



JOHNSTON HOISTS TWO OF HIS HISTORY-MAKING FISH

PETERBOROUGH, ONTARIO'S Chris Johnston made angling history this past July when he won the 2020 SiteOne Bassmaster Elite tournament on the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario—the first time a Canadian has ever won a Bassmaster Elite event. "To be able to do it on what I would call my home waters was pretty special for me," says the 31-year-old pro angler.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, anglers in the four-day tournament—held out of Clayton, New York—were only permitted to fish on the U.S. side of the St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario. Fortunately for Johnston, however, he was already familiar with the area, having fished numerous Competitive Sport Fishing League events out of Kingston. "For people who don't know Lake Ontario, it gets pretty rough," he says, partly crediting his home-court advantage for the win.

While the waters were fairly calm during the first three days of the four-day tournament, the wind picked up on the final day, whipping up six- to eight-foot waves. "Going into the last day, I had a spot that I had been saving because I knew the weather was coming," Johnston says. He also knew the tournament leader up to that point, Paul Mueller, didn't have much experience on Lake Ontario.

"I thought maybe this was my best chance, because I was two pounds behind," he says. "I've fished in that wind before, and knew if I could get out there and get 22 or 23 pounds, it might make him struggle because he's not used to that kind of water."

Johnston's decision to battle the wind and waves turned out to be the key. While Mueller stayed in the St. Lawrence and weighed in an 18.94-pound, five-fish bag, Johnston made an eight-kilometre run out into Lake Ontario, where he caught five fish totalling 22.75 pounds. In the end, his overall four-day weight for 20 fish was 97.5 pounds, earning him a hefty US$102,000 paycheque—and an enduring place in Canadian fishing history. OC

B.A.S.S. (JOHNSTON); PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE CANADA (HUNTER, BOOK)

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OUTFITTER STEVE OVERGUARD (LEFT) AND A PRE-PANDEMIC CLIENT

FIELD GUIDE

VIRAL GUIDANCE

PRO ADVICE FOR HUNTING WITH AN OUTFITTER IN THE ERA OF COVID-19

BY BOB SEXTON

STEVE OVERGUARD MAY be the recipient of 2019's Outfitter of the Year honour from the Alberta Professional Outfitter's Association, but that hasn't stopped the COVID-19 pandemic from taking a dire toll on his guiding business. With the border still closed to his mainly U.S. client base, Sundre-based Overguard figures his income is down by 80 per cent this year. Still, he remains optimistic, and welcomes Alberta's temporary regulation change allowing residents to purchase guided hunts normally reserved for non-residents. With that change, he says, there's no better time for Canadians to book a bucket-list hunt—if they do their homework. Here's what Overguard says you should watch for.

VALUE "It's the best chance ever for Canadian residents to work with different outfitters," Overguard says, noting that the U.S. dollar fees for many hunts are being offered on par with the Canadian dollar. "That's a hell of a savings." For example, he says his daughter and son-in-law recently booked a Dall's sheep hunt in the Yukon, which would be have been prohibitively expensive in years past. The point here? Shop around.

PLANNING Ask potential outfitters how many other clients they've booked for the same period you want to head afield. Due to all the cancellations this year, and with clients transferring their hunts to future years, some outfitters may be inclined to double book, creating conflicts. "You have to watch for outfitters who might say, 'Yeah, come next year,' but they've already booked guys from the year before," Overguard warns.

SAFETY Ensure your outfitter is taking proper measures to reduce the risk of guests contracting COVID-19. For example, Overguard's hunter clients must undergo a temperature check and don masks before boarding the plane to his remote lodge on northern Alberta's Bistcho Lake. Then once they arrive, "there's no shaking hands and hugging like they're used to be," he says. And while at the lodge, guests must practise physical distancing at all times, even out in the field. Normally, Overguard would encourage guests to get involved in all aspects of the hunt, including field dressing game, but now they're required to step back and leave the work to the guides. With any potential outfitter, he says, be sure to ask about the client-staff ratio—you want to ensure there'll be enough hired hands to get jobs done, while still allowing everyone to maintain proper social distancing. OC

FOR MORE ON OVERGUARD'S OUTFITTING OPERATION, ALBERTA ADVENTURES, GO TO WWW.OUTDOORCANADA.CA/OVERGUARD.

DOG SENSE

OFFAL GOOD

Seriously, you're not going to throw that out, are you? I'm almost positive that's what runs through my dog's head as she watches me butcher a deer. Wild game animals contain parts we humans find unpalatable, but those same unwanted bits can easily be transformed into flavourful snacks for Fido—helping to make the most of your harvest.



BENEFITS With so many commercial dog snacks available, why bother making treats from the leftover scraps? First, it's economical—big-game organs alone yield a bounty of extras that can reward your dog for months after the hunt. Then there's the nutritional aspect, as offal is rich in protein and packed with minerals to supplement your dog's healthy diet. Finally, your dog will love every morsel, and you'll feel good about making use of the entire animal.

VARIETY Some hunters love wild-game liver, but if you don't, save it for your dog. There are plenty of recipes online for making dog cookies from this massive meaty organ, or you can simply slice it up and bake the strips at 350°F for about 30 minutes. My dog doesn't get the heart—that's for me—but she does get the connective tissue trimmed from it. Bloodshot meat is another doggie favourite, as are the other bits typically destined for the gut pile, such as testicles, kidneys and lungs.

MODERATION It's important to know what healthy innards look like so that you don't risk feeding your dog diseased organs. Wild game can also contain parasites that are transmissible to your dog, so be sure to thoroughly cook the meaty morsels to kill any nasties. And don't over-indulge your dog—treats should only be used as high-value training rewards in conjunction with a balanced diet of commercial dog food. —**LOWELL STRAUSS**

TO LEARN ABOUT COMMON WILDLIFE DISEASES AND PARASITES, GO TO WWW.OUTDOORCANADA.CA/THE-YUCK-FACTOR.

STEVE OVERGUARD (HUNTERS); LOWELL STRAUSS (DOG)



ANGELO VIOLA RELEASES A CHUNKY SIMCOE BASS

DESTINATION

LAKE SIMCOE

HITTING THE WATER WITH TV'S *FISH'N CANADA SHOW*

BY PETE BOWMAN & ANGELO VIOLA

DO YOU WANT to catch the biggest smallmouth bass of your life? How about a double-digit whitefish or a toothy northern pike? Maybe a flurry of lake trout, either out on the open water or through the ice? Or perhaps a limit of jumbo yellow perch for the ultimate fish fry? Well, all of those great catches—and more—can be had on southern Ontario's expansive Lake Simcoe, one of the best and most diverse fisheries in the entire country.

The fourth largest lake entirely within Ontario's borders, Simcoe covers an area of 744 square kilometres and plummets 41 metres at its deepest point. This is big water, so boaters and anglers need to be careful—it gets nasty out there when the wind whips up, no matter what direction it's coming from.

Along with the fish already mentioned, Simcoe is also home to largemouth bass, black crappies, bowfins, burbot, brown bullheads, carp and ciscoes. There's even a run of walleye from the Talbot River, and the promise of a restored muskie population thanks to recent conservation efforts.

In our opinion, though, it's the smallmouth bass that are king on Lake Simcoe. During a typical bass tournament, for example, a 20-plus-pound bag of five smallies is common, with the winners typically approaching 30 or more pounds. Now that's a lot of monster bass.

During the open-water season, there are numerous public and private boat launches available around the lake, so access is easy. There are also several guiding services on the lake, both in summer and during the hardwater season. Accommodations are simple to find, too. If you get a chance to fish on this awe-inspiring body of water, do it. OC

VISIT WWW.ONTARIOTRAVEL.NET TO LEARN MORE ABOUT LAKE SIMCOE. FOR A COMPLETE GUIDE TO *FISH'N CANADA* EPISODES, TV CHANNELS AND SHOW TIMES, GO TO WWW.FISHNCANADA.COM OR WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/FISHNCANADA.

FISH'N CANADA SHOW (LAKE SIMCOE); MARK RAYCROFT (DUCK MOUNTAIN, MEADOW LAKE); PETE BOWMAN (ALGOMA COUNTRY)

GETAWAYS



DUCK MOUNTAIN

Located between Manitoba's Swan Lake and Dauphin, the Duck Mountain region boasts excellent whitetail habitat: thick forested escape cover, lots of vertical relief and agricultural land providing food and edge habitat. Throw in great deer genetics and you have the perfect recipe for trophy bucks. Contact the Manitoba Lodges and Outfitters Association to make your hunt arrangements. *(204) 772-1912; www.mloa.com* —**KEN BAILEY**

MEADOW LAKE



Well-managed moose populations and quality habitat combine to make for outstanding hunting in northwest Saskatchewan's Meadow Lake region. You can choose an early bowhunting season, a rut-season hunt or a post-rut hunt—all offer a good chance of tagging out on a mature bull. The Saskatchewan Commission of Professional Outfitters can help out with planning. *(306) 668-1388; www.scpo.ca*

—**KEN BAILEY**

ALGOMA COUNTRY



Famous for its fall scenery and spectacular brook trout fishing, the Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, area boasts plenty of stocked lakes you can fish year round. During autumn, the crimson red trout attempt to spawn in the shallows, just like their wild cousins. That's when #2 and #3 Mepps in bright red and pink egg patterns shine. Contact Algoma Country Tourism to start planning your visit. *1-800-263-2546; www.algomacountry.com*

—**GORD PYZER**

TABLE FARE

BLUEBERRY-PEPPER ELK

ROASTED TENDERLOIN DRIZZLED WITH A SWEET AND SPICY SAUCE

RECIPE & PHOTO BY CAMERON TAIT



TO WATCH CAMERON TAIT PREPARE THIS DISH AND OTHERS, GO TO WWW.OUTDOORCANADA.CA/FOOD.

REVERED AS ONE of the most prized wild game meats, elk has a unique earthy flavour and texture. And combined with this recipe's blueberry and pickled green peppercorn sauce, it makes for a truly exceptional meal. Just be sure to serve the meat medium-rare— if overcooked, elk becomes too dry and chewy. No elk in your freezer? Deer tenderloin is a great substitute. *Serves 4.*

- 1½ to 2 lb elk tenderloin
- 3 long fresh rosemary sprigs
- Kosher salt, black pepper to taste
- 2 tbsp canola oil

SAUCE

- 2 tbsp butter
- 1 shallot, finely diced
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 cup red wine
- 3 cups beef stock
- ¼ cup pickled green peppercorns, crushed
- ½ tsp kosher salt
- 3 tbsp soft butter
- 3 tbsp flour
- ½ cup blueberries

1] Trim all silver skin and excess fat from the tenderloin. Tie individual loops of butcher's twine around the meat, spaced three inches apart. Make the loops snug, but not too tight, then thread the rosemary under the twine on top of the tenderloin. Season the meat on all sides with salt and pepper, then set aside.

2] For the sauce, melt the butter in a saucepan on medium heat, and sweat the shallot and garlic for 5 minutes, stirring often. Add the red wine and bring to a simmer for 10 minutes to burn off the alcohol, then add the beef stock, peppercorns and salt. Leave on low heat.

3] In a large frying pan on high heat, add the canola oil and sear the tenderloin on all sides. Lay the seared meat on a parchment-lined sheet pan and place in the centre of a 300°F oven. Once it reaches an internal temperature of 125°F, remove the meat and let it rest for 15 minutes to allow the juices to disperse before slicing.

4] Meanwhile, bring the sauce back to a simmer. Knead the soft butter and flour together until well combined (the fancy name for this is *beurre manié*). Whisk half the mixture into the sauce to thicken it, adding more as needed until the sauce has the consistency of light gravy. Add the blueberries and continue simmering for another five minutes.

5] Serve the sliced tenderloin with fingerling potatoes and gold beets, with the sauce on the side in a gravy bowl. OC

FOR THE GLASS



A dry, medium-bodied red wine with accents of cherry and vanilla, this Cabernet Merlot from Niagara-on-Lake, Ontario's Peller Family Vineyards makes a perfect pairing for roast elk.


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THE GOODS

WOOL WEAR

KEEP WARM WITH HEAD-TO-TOE MERINO APPAREL FOR HUNTERS AND ANGLERS

BY SCOTT GARDNER

TRADITIONAL WOOL GARMENTS may keep you warm, but they're also heavy, bulky and itchy. Wool from merino sheep, however, is a game changer when it comes to outdoor apparel. It's thin and soft, yet it wicks moisture, blends well with synthetics and is exceptionally resistant to human odours. And yes, it keeps you warm—especially on those chilly days afield and on the water.



WOMEN'S LUCCA ZIP TOP ($350)
Icebreaker, www.icebreaker.com
Key features: Heavyweight mid-layer merino-blend fleece; offset shoulder seams to prevent pack rub; hand and chest zip pockets. **The promise:** "Incredible warmth with amplified breathability."

ACCESS NXT PULLOVER (US$199)
Voormi, www.voormi.com
Key features: Tough merino/nylon blend; water-repellent finish; four-way stretch side panels; chest pocket; men's and women's sizes. **The promise:** "Our lightest and most breathable wool."





250 BASELAYER COLORBLOCK ($139.99)
Smartwool, www.smartwool.ca
Key features: Women's tights made with 100 per cent merino; minimizes chafing; nine colours and patterns. **The promise:** "Comfort, breathability, thermoregulation and odour resistance."



KILN ZIP OFF LONG JOHN ($168) *First Lite, www.firstlite.com*
Key features: Mid-weight base layer made with ultra-fine merino; side zippers for easy removal in the field; four men's sizes. **The promise:** "Versatile performance during mid- to late-season hunts."



NWT 150 LIGHTWEIGHT CREW (US$69.99)
BlackOvis, www.blackovis.com
Key features: Long-sleeved base layer with a 50/50 merino/polyester blend; extra long to stay tucked in; machine washable. **The promise:** "Sets the standard for soft, warm and comfortable."



FINGERLESS GLOVES **($24.99)**
Hot Shot, www.hotshotgear.com
Key features: 100 per cent merino; fingerless for better control of gear; seamless; ribbed cuff; can be worn alone or as a glove liner. **The promise:** “Better control while hunting and fishing.”





CAMO OVER-THE-CALF CUSHION **(US$35)**
Darn Tough, www.darntough.com
Key features: Merino/nylon/spandex blend socks; graduated compression; under-foot cushioning; undetectable seam. **The promise:** “Guaranteed for life: No strings. No conditions.”

PURSUIT HIKE MEDIUM CUSHION **(US$19.19)**
Swiftwick, www.swiftwick.com
Key features: Six-inch cuff height; 69 per cent merino blend; seamless toe; made for boots in cooler temperatures; men’s and women’s sizes. **The promise:** “The driest hiking sock in its class.”



HEAVYWEIGHT HAT **($45)**
Buff, www.buffcanada.com
Key features: Two layers of 100 per cent merino; designed for low- to medium-intensity activities in extreme cold; one size fits all; various colour choices. **The promise:** “Great comfort and protection.” OC

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MAGICAL MERINO

Primarily farmed in New Zealand, merino sheep are bred to tolerate both blazing summer heat and frosty winters, resulting in a unique wool. Not all merino clothing is created equal, however.

WEIGHT Merino garments come in a variety of weights (or thicknesses), ranging from ultralight to heavy. There’s no standard measure, so carefully read the apparel’s description to make sure it suits your needs.

BLEND Merino is sometimes blended with synthetic fibres to increase its durability or stretchiness. Blends can also be used to reduce cost, so beware of apparel that is more than 50 per cent synthetic. Less merino means less of its special characteristics.

MANUFACTURERS

NEW & NOTEWORTHY



540I XP
Ideal for clearing trails and bucking logs around camp or the cabin, Husqvarna’s battery-powered 540i XP ($779.99) runs cleaner and quieter than its gas-powered cousins. Just as powerful as a 40cc saw, this lightweight machine promises the same level of cutting performance, but without the fumes and excessive vibration. *1-800-805-5523; www.husqvarna.com*



CANYONS
Stylish enough to wear to a wildlife banquet, Irish Setter’s Canyons hiking boots (US$169.99) are equally up to handling gnarly wet trails. Made from durable, full-grain, waterproof leather, they feature a shin-cushioning tongue, scent control and a Vibram rubber sole for exceptional traction. *1-888-738-8370; www.irishsetterboots.com*



SHADOW HARNESS
Lightweight, flexible and very strong, the value-priced Shadow Harness (US$49.99) sports tactical release buckles, making it easy to take on and off while eliminating pesky dangling straps. It fits snugly over lightweight clothing or under cold-weather apparel to keep you safely tethered in your treestand. *(256) 773-7732; www.huntersafetysystem.com*



SPOT GEN4
Made for maintaining contact with the outside world when you’re fishing or hunting out of cell range, the new SPOT Gen4 satellite GPS messenger ($149.99) features customized tracking capabilities, improved mapping and greater water resistance. The Gen4 also promises the longest battery life in its class. *1-866-651-7768; www.findmespot.com*

BY CRAIG MITCHELL



THE AUTHOR AFTER A SUCCESSFUL HUNT

New blood

WHY ADULT BEGINNERS ARE JUST WHAT HUNTING NEEDS RIGHT NOW

I CALL MYSELF an "adult onset hunter," and it's just what it sounds like: an adult who has dived into the hunting world without any experience, and without a family or childhood connection to help mentor me. And I'm not alone. Together with many others just like me, we represent a new generation of hunter, bringing fresh blood into this age-old pastime.

There are many reasons for this new surge in the popularity of hunting. For my part, it provides an opportunity to spend more time immersed in the outdoors, while also allowing me a closer relationship with my food and the environment. For others, it's about the adventure and the thrill of the hunt, or maybe the camaraderie of hunt camp and that extra scotch around the campfire.

Whatever the case, we all may have begun hunting for one or two specific reasons, but we've since found countless others for heading afield and forgetting about the nine-to-five world. For you lifelong hunters, this is something you should not only encourage, but also celebrate.

THE NEWBIE UPSIDE

The unfortunate reality is that the number of hunters has been on a steady decline in recent years, and the sport continues to face an uphill battle in the world of public relations. Hunting needs all the support it can get, making the men and women new to its ranks a valuable asset.

For starters, adult onset hunters generally come from middle- to upper-class backgrounds, meaning they have the money to spend at local hunting shops. Think of how much gear you currently own. Now imagine having to buy most of it at one time without the benefit of hand-me-downs. That's a lot of money, and good news for the outdoors economy.

Also think of how new adult hunters can help bolster the ranks of the shooting sports community. Many of us come from the big bad cities, where gun owners are often vilified—what better place to build support for responsible firearms use than behind enemy lines? I held many misinformed ideas about guns before obtaining my firearms and hunting licences, for example, but now target shooting and hunting are two of my favourite hobbies. At a time when gun legislation is such a contentious issue, the importance of growing the firearms community can't be overstated.

Then there's conservation. An influx of new hunters means more people buying tags and licences, which means more money going toward conservation projects and wildlife management. Rather than worry about us discovering your favourite grouse covey or secret buck bedding area, therefore, consider instead how our fresh contributions could very well lead to the establishment of new hunting grounds and conservation areas.

THE LEARNING CURVE

Of course, it's not easy for us onset adult hunters to make it on our own—to the inexperienced, hunting as a hobby and lifestyle can often seem unapproachable. Please keep in mind that we didn't get the chance to learn how to gut and skin a deer from granddad, or call in a wild turkey from an uncle. And we didn't have someone explain to us that hunting grouse on crown land during moose season might lead to a confrontation with a group of heavily armed and very angry locals (true story).

No, we are learning as we go, soaking up whatever useful information we come across, whether it's from magazines, books, YouTube or online chatrooms. So please, the next time someone asks what you would consider to be a forehead smacker of a dumb question, just remember that—for some of us—this season could be our very first to head out hunting. Those same questions you were able to ask your dad in the safety and comfort of the hunting blind are now being asked by some of us through e-mails and texts, often to complete strangers.

To those who reply with patience and kindness, and extend offers of mentorship, thank you. It means the world to us newcomers. We may look a bit lost and dress a little oddly at times—you might even consider some of us to be yuppies, or even hipsters—but please don't judge us for that. After all, we all have the same interests at heart. Heck, we might even turn out to be good hunting buddies one day. See you on the trails. OC

GUEST COLUMNIST CRAIG MITCHELL GOT HIS FIRST TASTE OF HUNTING IN 2016.

CRAIG MITCHELL

WEATHER OR NOT.



WICKED WING™
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FOLLOWERS CAN BE CAUGHT BOATSIDE

Go figure

HOW TO MASTER ONE OF MUSKIE FISHING'S MOST ESSENTIAL TACTICS

DURING THE MUSKIE-FISHING renaissance of the 1980s and '90s, you would catch at least 75 per cent of your fish on a straight retrieve. As for the other 25 per cent—the slowpokes and laggards—you would catch them by making a large figure eight (or oval) in the water at the side of the boat with your lure. Today, with the increase in muskie-fishing pressure and the prevalence of catch-and-release angling, the stats are reversed. So, anyone muskie hunting these days better know how to hook the lookers with a figure eight.

First, always assume the fish of a lifetime is following your lure on every cast, and that you're only going to hook it when you sweep your lure alongside the boat and into a figure eight. If nothing else, remember this: you waste a cast if you abruptly pull your lure out of the water at the end of the retrieve.

Time was, I'd get my angler guests to practise making figure eights before we even left the dock. I soon discovered, however, that getting them to make a figure eight rarely worked out as planned during the adrenaline-fuelled moment of decision. So, now I have my guests incorporate the manoeuvre on every cast, making it a fixed part of their retrieve. Even then, the first time most anglers spot a big toothy critter trailing their lure, their eyes bug out and their knees tremble.

THE TECHNIQUE

Always remember that muskies are long—the ones I typically want to catch exceed 50 inches—so don't cramp their style by making a small figure eight or oval. Go big instead to make it easy for the fish to turn and chase down your bait. That is where nine-foot rods shine, especially if you're positioned properly at the side of the boat (if you're in the centre of the casting platform, you can't bring the rod's entire length into play).

Another key part of the game is being able to recognize when a muskie is about to strike. I love it, for example, when a giant pops the tips of its dorsal and tail fins out of the water like a shark as it bulges the surface behind my bait. On the other hand, if I spot the fish trailing well below and behind my lure, I know I'm going to have to work for it.

The biggest follower I hooked this past season trailed my surface bait that way, but by spotting it early halfway into my retrieve, I was able to get down on my knees and plunge the rod so deeply my hand was in the water. That put the bait right in her wheelhouse, and she picked up the pace slightly as I pulled it alongside the boat. Then as I swung into the first turn, I hesitated ever so slightly and she lunged, inhaling the lure.

Many anglers will tell you I was lucky because surface baits are the worst lures for enticing followers, but I disagree. The problem in this particular case is that most folks either go into the figure eight with the lure still on the surface, or they only take it under a few inches. Instead, you need to quickly get the lure down deep as though it were a panic-stricken creature fleeing for its life. Then it's the directional changes on the turns that will trigger the trailing muskie to flare its gills, lash out and devour the bait.

In general, the outside turn on a figure eight or oval is the pivotal moment for most strikes, so get your lure up or down to the depth the fish is at and keep your turns as wide as possible. Remember, every bait responds differently when you make a figure eight, so be sure to know your lure's particular idiosyncrasies before a big fish appears.

Finally, never give up on a follower, even if it appears to have vanished—it's likely under the boat watching, so keep making figure eights and hang on tight. Do it all right, and three out of every four muskies you catch will come on a figure eight. OC

CATCH GORD PYZER ON THE *OUTDOOR JOURNAL RADIO SHOW* ON THE FAN 590. SEE WWW.ODJ RADIO.COM FOR TIMES.

[FOR TIPS ON LATE-SEASON MUSKIES, GO TO WWW.OUTDOORCANADA.CA/FALLMUSKIES.]

BY SCOTT GARDNER



USE A LENGTH OF MONO AS A LEADER

Leader logic

STILL TYING ON A TAPERED LEADER? HERE'S WHY YOU DON'T NEED TO

THERE MAY BE no more confusing and vexing element in all of fly fishing than leaders. Even worse, 90 per cent of everything you've ever been told about leaders is just plain wrong. Or more correctly, most leader lore is needlessly complicated and decades out of date. How do I know? Because almost 20 years ago, I threw away the leader rulebook, yet kept catching more and bigger fish.

Emerging from the Dark Ages of leader understanding has improved and simplified my fly-fishing life more than anything else I have ever done. And it can do the same for you, too, if you follow me into the light. Here's how.

LEADER LORE

A monofilament or fluorocarbon fly-fishing leader has two jobs: form a near-invisible connection between the fly line and fly, and smoothly transfer enough kinetic energy from the fly line so that it lands straight (in arcane fly lingo, that's called "turning over" the fly).

Early mono, from the 1950s, was very stiff, and the era's fibreglass rods were soft and underpowered. So, the only way to get a smooth transfer of energy from the fly line was with a tapered leader, made by tying together segments of successively lighter mono. For example, a 10-foot leader might start with a length of 20-pound test, roughly as thick as the fly line, followed by three, four or five lighter segments. The final piece, called the "tippet," would be sized to the fish (four-pound-test for stream trout, for example).

Knotted tapered leaders were—and still are—are a pain to tie, especially on the water. In addition, the knots pick up weeds and gunk in the water, and each knot introduces a potential failure point. So, when knotless tapered leaders appeared commercially in the 1980s, they quickly became the rage. I spent a small fortune on those $10 tapered leaders before realizing they were a scam.

TAPER TRAP

To be clear, a tapered leader—whether it's homemade or purchased—does the job. It connects your fly, and straightens out as it should. And every fly-fishing manual in the last 70 years says you need a tapered leader. But here's the thing: 90 per cent of the time, a straight piece of mono or flouro fishing line does the job just as well. Why? Because modern mono is flexible enough to transfer energy without a taper, especially when combined with today's colossally improved lines and rods.

As fly-fishing gear has improved, however, it seems few anglers have bothered to question conventional leader wisdom. But I have. Since the early 2000s, I've been using simple one-piece mono leaders for almost all of my freshwater fly fishing. They cost about 20 cents each, and work perfectly. In fact, if you can't get a nine-foot mono leader to land straight, you don't have a leader problem—you've got a casting problem.

SIMPLE SYSTEM

For floating lines, I just use a single seven- to 12-foot length of mono, selecting the line strength based on the size of the fly and the fish. For the vast majority of my trout fishing, with flies from size 14 up to size 8, I use six-pound mono. On windy days or when using bigger flies, you need a somewhat stiffer leader, so I'll go up to eight- or sometimes even 10-pound line. (With the heavier mono, I tie on my fly with a loop knot to ensure it has plenty of action.) I only deviate from this system on the rare occasion when I use a tiny size 16 or 18 fly. Then I'll add 18 inches of four-pound to the end, just so I can thread the line through the hook's minuscule eye.

I realize that bucking decades of conventional fly-fishing wisdom makes me sound like a member of the tinfoil-hat brigade. But if you don't believe me, try it yourself. Under identical conditions on the lawn or on the water, cast a tapered leader, then a straight one. Even better, conduct a blind test, with someone else rigging the rod so you don't know whether you're casting a straight or tapered leader. I'll bet you my best trout rod you won't be able to tell the difference—and that it will change your life. OC

LEARN HOW TO FIX CASTING PROBLEMS AT WWW.OUTDOORCANADA.CA/FLYCASTFIXES.

ASSOCIATE EDITOR SCOTT GARDNER OFTEN BUCKS ANGLING TRADITIONS.

GORD PYZER (MUSKIE); PATRICK WALSH (TROUT)

BY BRAD FENSON



MAINTAINING PROPER FORM IS ESSENTIAL

Sure shots

ENSURE ACCURACY IN THE FIELD BY ALWAYS KEEPING YOUR BOW LEVEL

TO MAKE ACCURATE shots, it's essential to hold your bow level. Fortunately, the sights on most modern crossbows and compounds come with a level in the scope housing or on the sight bar. Still, you have to make sure the sight is adjusted properly in terms of its three axes—the imaginary lines around which an object rotates. If your bow doesn't have an onboard level, on the other hand, there are some handy tricks for staying level in the field.

AXIS ADJUSTMENTS

Today's quality compound bow sights are made to shift, rotate or tilt on three different axes that you can adjust to make sure you're always shooting on the level. While you can easily bring your bow to an archery shop to get the sight properly adjusted, you can also do it yourself if you have a bow vise and the right tools (see "Tool box"). It also helps to watch videos showing how to set up the first, second and third axes.

The first axis is the level of the sight-mounting bracket in relation to the bow. It runs from left to right in front of you, parallel to the ground, and needs to be perfectly perpendicular with the bow's riser before the second and third axes can be levelled. The second axis is the one most archers pay attention to when sighting a bow. It refers to the level of the sight head and pins, and runs on an imaginary line straight through the centre of your scope or sight.

As for the third axis, it refers to the pitch of the sight head, either away from you or towards you. It runs vertically through the centre of your sight and comes into play when you're shooting up or downhill, especially at a distance of more than 40 metres. If the third axis isn't level, your arrow will fly like it was launched from a canted bow.

SENSORY PERCEPTION

Sight adjustments aside, it also helps if you can tell if your bow is level just by feel, rather than by what you see. That's because your eyes can play tricks on you when you focus on features downrange—a hillside slope, tilted tree or even a target that is not level can lead you to improperly align your bow with what you perceive to be level.

When you can't see things that might deceive your brain and alter your sense of balance, on the other hand, your mind and body will often keep your bow level on their own. To test this, close your eyes, draw your bow and try to level it at your target. Then open your eyes, hold the bow steady and check your sight—it should be level. Of course, only do this on a closed range, where it's safe.

Shooting from a sweeping right or left slope can also play tricks on your brain. If you focus on the target and bow limbs, however, it's easier to maintain level with every shot.

Practice is also essential for consistent accuracy. To test this, sight-in your bow for various distances, then shoot at those distances, but with your bow held off level. Also, try shooting with the bow canted to the left and right. In all cases, your arrow's trajectory and point of impact will be off the mark, reinforcing the need for proper form.

An experienced archer will automatically feel if the bow is level, or if the limbs are tipped to one side. To confirm the bow is level, the arrow rest can provide a visual indicator. You can also look through the scope or sight to see if it lines up with a straight edge, such as the side of a structure or a utility pole, in the background. Of course, not all objects in your surroundings are guaranteed to be level, but if you continually strive for it, maintaining level will become second nature—and your shots will be accurate. OC

ALBERTA CONTRIBUTOR BRAD FENSON ALWAYS KEEPS HIS BOW ON THE LEVEL.

TOOL BOX



If you're planning to adjust your bow's first, second and third axes yourself, you'll need the following tools. And to help guide you through the process, check out the videos at www.outdoorcanada.ca/bowaxes.

- Bow vise
- Allen key set
- 12- to 36-inch carpenter's level
- Plumb bob
- Third-axis level (pictured)
- String level

BY KEN BAILEY



GOOD FORM CAN HELP MINIMIZE PARALLAX

Off target

AN OPTICS PRIMER ON PREVENTING THE PROBLEM OF PARALLAX ERROR

WHEN SHOOTING AT extended distances with a riflescope, parallax is a commonly misunderstood optical problem that can affect your ability to shoot accurately. To better understand what parallax is, and how shooters can correct it, I turned to Reg Wales, a technical field advisor at Vortex Canada. He provided me with a copy of Vortex's Operational Tactical Optics Program, a training course on extreme-range shooting for law enforcement and military personnel.

"Parallax is essentially an optical illusion," explains the course material. "It presents itself as the apparent movement of the reticle in relation to the target when your eye moves off centre of the sight picture (exit pupil) or, in more extreme cases, it can appear as an out-of-focus image."

Still unsure of the concept? Extend one arm forward and point your forefinger at a distant target. Holding your finger still, move your head slightly to the side and it will appear as though your finger has moved off the target. In reality, your finger is still pointing at the target, but your line of sight has assumed a different angle, giving you the impression you need to move your finger to realign it with the target. That is essentially what happens when you experience parallax in your riflescope—if you adjust your point of aim in response, you will actually move the crosshairs off your target.

CAUSE AND EFFECT

Parallax occurs when the target image in your scope is not focused precisely on the same plane as the reticle. While riflescopes are generally designed to be free of parallax at 100 to 150 yards, a degree of parallax will occur when you aim at a target that's farther away or closer than the distance at which your scope is parallax-free.

To check for parallax before you shoot, look through your scope and slightly move your head side to side. If the reticle moves around your target, parallax is present and you may miss your shot if you don't compensate for it.

Fortunately, many modern riflescopes provide one of two ways to correct for parallax: an adjustable ring on the front objective lens, or an adjustable side turret. Both serve to move an internal lens element, which in turn moves the location of the target image in your scope, allowing you to get it on the same focal plane as your reticle.

The front objective lens system is the oldest, simplest and most economical of the two, so it's most often found on lower-end riflescopes. It's acknowledged to be more difficult to adjust when your cheek is welded to the stock, however, because you have to reach your free hand so far forward.

The good news is, both systems are generally effective and reliable. Many include yardage settings representing the distance at which the scope will be parallax-free, but those should be considered as guides only. If you know how far it is to your target, you can set your parallax accordingly for that distance, but be prepared to make further adjustments. Once your target and reticle are crystal clear—and you can move your head slightly without the reticle moving off the target—you're good to go. OC

HUNTING EDITOR KEN BAILEY ALWAYS AIMS TO STAY RIGHT ON HIS TARGET.

PARALLAX POINTERS

In brief, here's what hunters using riflescopes should know about parallax before heading afield.

- While parallax is an optical illusion, it can still cause shooters to miss their target. No optics are completely free of the problem.
- When you're shooting targets at distances of 250 yards or less, parallax isn't of much concern.
- If your scope has either an adjustable objective lens or side turret to correct parallax, leave it set at 100 yards (or to your anticipated shooting distance), adjusting only as needed.
- Check for the presence of parallax at every target distance by moving your head slightly, checking to see if the reticle moves around on the target—if it does, parallax is present. Make adjustments until the target is clear and the reticle remains precisely on the target, even when you move your head.
- A well-disciplined shooting form that aligns your eye perfectly with the centerline of your scope helps minimizes the presence of parallax.

BRAD FENSON (ARCHER); MANUFACTURER (THIRD AXIS-LEVEL); MARK RAYCROFT (HUNTER)





BIG game, BIG decision

SHOOT OR DON'T SHOOT? THAT'S THE CRUCIAL QUESTION WHEN IT COMES TO THESE 12 DIFFERENT HUNTING SITUATIONS

WORDS & PICTURES BY MARK RAYCROFT

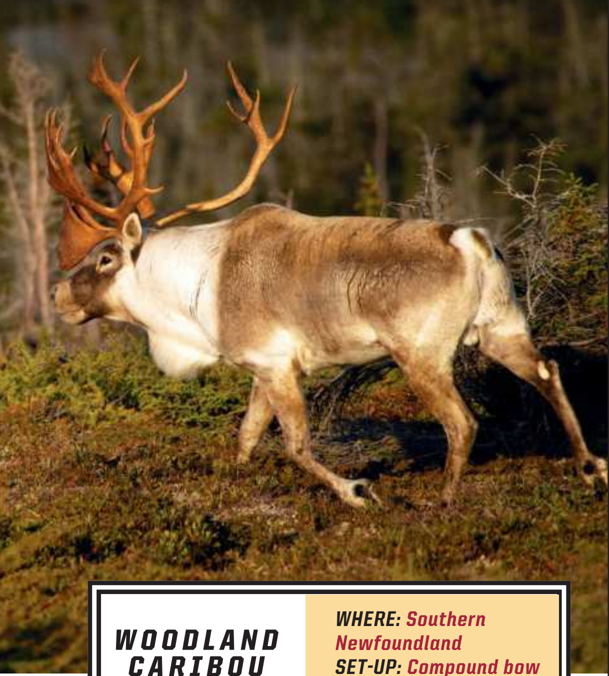
CANADA BOASTS A tremendous variety of big-game animals from coast to coast to coast, and that makes for countless different hunting scenarios. And each case demands careful consideration before you decide whether to make the shot. Will you be ready to make the right call at that critical moment when one of these magnificent beasts is in your sights? Take our pop quiz and find out, starting with the moose scenario pictured here.

CANADA MOOSE

WHERE: *NORTHERN PENINSULA, NEWFOUNDLAND*
SET-UP: *SCOPED .30-06 RIFLE*
DISTANCE: *180 YARDS*

SCENARIO After hiking and scanning the majestic but unpredictable Newfoundland terrain for more than an hour, you step to the edge of a big bog and are greeted by this sight. Shoot or don't shoot?

SHOOT! Steady your rifle on your shooting sticks—the opportunity is there as the cow moose continues to step away. A carefully placed shot just to the left of centre should hit the bull's heart and make for a quick drop. Remember, a moose's vitals are concentrated in the lower portion of its chest, so place your crosshairs accordingly. »



WOODLAND CARIBOU

WHERE: Southern Newfoundland
SET-UP: Compound bow
DISTANCE: 30 yards

SCENARIO You glassed this trophy stag when he was 300 yards away, then played the wind and stalked to within bow range as he popped through the conifers. Shoot or don't shoot?

DON'T SHOOT! Proper arrow placement is essential for a successful harvest, and this caribou is at a trot. Rather than risk wounding the majestic animal, make a grunt or wave a white cloth to get him to stop and offer a far better opportunity.

WHITE-TAILED DEER

WHERE: Eastern Ontario
SET-UP: Scoped slug gun
DISTANCE: 70 yards

SCENARIO You've been listening to a light rain patter on your ground blind for more than two hours when you look up and catch a flash of white leaping away, led by a nice rack of antlers. Shoot or don't shoot?

DON'T SHOOT! Not only is it considered unethical to take a pot shot at fleeing big game, there's also a high risk of wounding the buck and not recovering it (plus, rain is never helpful when following a blood trail). Respect the bruiser enough to pursue him another day.





BLACK BEAR

WHERE: Manitoba
SET-UP: Compound bow
DISTANCE: 38 yards

SCENARIO After hearing the spruce boughs rustling along the edge of the meadow where you're set up, this Goliath of a black bear—the dream boar you've had on your trail cam for the past two nights—emerges, stops and pants. Shoot or don't shoot?

SHOOT! Carefully draw your bow, aim behind that front left shoulder, exhale and release. You'll soon have more than enough bear steaks to fill your freezer and keep you in wild game meat until the next spring.

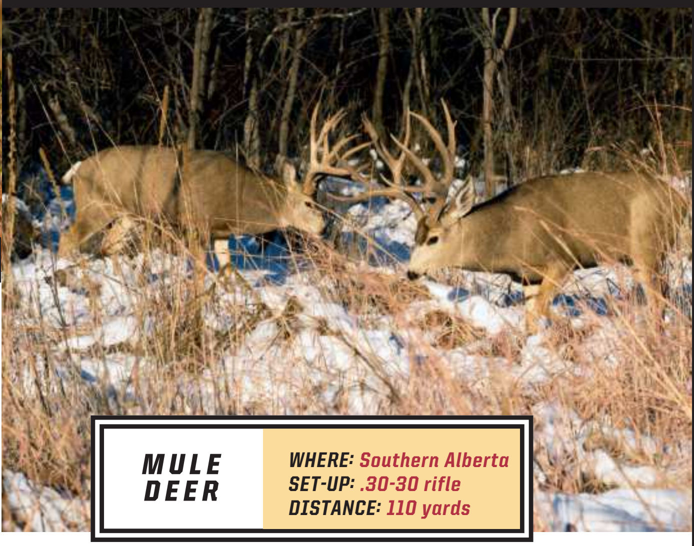


PRONGHORN ANTELOPE

WHERE: Saskatchewan prairie
SET-UP: .300 Win. Mag. rifle
DISTANCE: 160 yards

SCENARIO It snowed the previous night, making ideal conditions for tracking, spotting and stalking pronghorns. After a morning spent hiking, you intercept a fresh collection of tracks and change course. Less than a kilometre later, you peek over a rise and find this scene in front of you. Shoot or don't shoot?

SHOOT! You're in a prone position, your rifle is braced and you quickly place your crosshairs on the buck. Only shoot, however, if you can safely do so before he walks closer to the does. Otherwise, wait for him to clear the herd and present another opportunity.



MULE DEER

WHERE: Southern Alberta
SET-UP: .30-30 rifle
DISTANCE: 110 yards

SCENARIO What a sight. You can't believe your eyes when these two trophy mule deer bucks step from the brush just ahead of you and begin to square off. They're totally distracted by one another, and have no idea you are there. Instinctively, you eye up the closer animal because it's bigger. Shoot or don't shoot?

DON'T SHOOT! The bullet just might hit a bone and deflect, also hitting the other buck. It's not worth chancing that, so you'll have to wait it out. Or not. The bruiser in the rear looks every bit the trophy, so he could be your target instead—if you're quick.



BISON

WHERE: Northern Alberta
SET-UP: .338 Mag. rifle
DISTANCE: 145 yards

SCENARIO A herd you've been watching for an hour finally comes into range. This dominant bull is showing unabashed interest in a female, and as he circles around her, he turns broadside. Shoot or don't shoot?

DON'T SHOOT! The monstrous bison is practically blocking out the sky he's so big. There's just no way to know how many other animals might be behind him, and therefore at risk of being struck by your high-calibre shot. Given that the bull is so focused on his mating duties, however, the odds are high you'll soon have a better opportunity. »

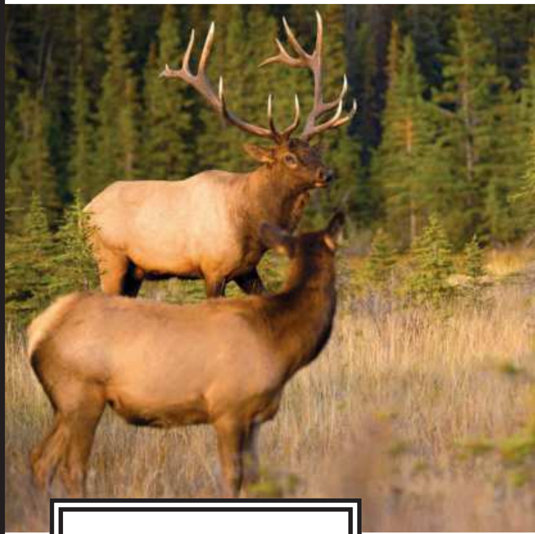


BIGHORN SHEEP

WHERE: Northern Alberta
SET-UP: Scoped .308 rifle
DISTANCE: 120 yards

SCENARIO The previous day while hiking from your base camp, you glassed a far hillside and noticed a group of mature rams. Starting out before dawn, you make your way up the gradual, grassy hillside and spot this beauty. Shoot or don't shoot?

SHOOT! The range is good and you're certain the ram is standing on a grassy hillside, not at the edge of a cliff where you might not be able to retrieve him. The time is now.



ELK

WHERE: Southern British Columbia
SET-UP: Scoped .308 rifle
DISTANCE: 175 yards

SCENARIO You bugle and instantly receive a reply from a few hundred yards away. Minutes pass and you repeat your call. The bull answers again, but it sounds like he hasn't moved any closer. After waiting another 10 minutes, you bugle a third time and the reply still emanates from the same location. Assuming the bull is reluctant to abandon some females, you carefully sneak downwind through the evergreens until you spot him in the middle of a meadow with this cow elk in the foreground. Shoot or don't shoot?

DON'T SHOOT! The responsible choice is to wait for the cow to move away, or for the bull to step forward—that way, there's no chance of your bullet hitting the cow. As it stands, the top of her back is too close in line to the bull's vitals. Patience is the key here.



MOUNTAIN GOAT

WHERE: Rocky Mountains, British Columbia
SET-UP: Scoped .270 rifle
DISTANCE: 190 yards

SCENARIO You spot a group of goats working along the base of a mountainside when all of a sudden this shaggy beauty pops into sight, just under 200 yards away. Shoot or don't shoot?

SHOOT! The goat has no idea you're in the vicinity, so you have ample time to brace your gun. With the angle of the animal's body presenting a perfect shot, savoury goat stew is soon to be on your menu for months to come.



BARREN-GROUND CARIBOU

WHERE: Western Yukon
SET-UP: .270 rifle
DISTANCE: 165 yards

SCENARIO After hours of hiking the alpine ridges, you finally glimpse this tall-tined caribou of your dreams, silhouetted again a distant valley wall. Shoot or don't shoot?

DON'T SHOOT! You have no idea whether there's a shear drop-off behind the bull, which would make recovery all but impossible. Freeze in place and let the animal move on a bit, then play the wind and attempt a spot-and-stalk approach for a better opportunity.



YUKON-ALASKA MOOSE

WHERE: Northwest Territories
SET-UP: .30-06 rifle
DISTANCE: 100 yards

SCENARIO Twenty minutes have passed since you bellowed out an alluring cow call when you spot the glint of a bull's paddles in the early-evening light. Soon you can hear the squelch of the giant's hooves as he manoeuvres across the wetland. Shoot or don't shoot?

DON'T SHOOT! Recovering a 1,200-plus-pound animal out of a bog is a feat no human should try. Wait for him to hopefully gain solid ground before taking a shot—and securing a freezer full of nutritious meat in the process.

MARK RAYCROFT PHOTOGRAPHS BIG GAME ALL ACROSS CANADA.

FALL FRENZY

How to make autumn's topsy-turvy conditions work in your favour to tackle more trophy fish

BY GORD PYZER



TO CATCH BIG FALL BASS, STUDY HOW THEIR HABITS CHANGE WITH THE WEATHER

Fall is trophy fish time, but it can also be the most challenging and perplexing season of the year for most anglers. Why? Because so many factors are changing so fast and so dramatically. Think about it: We enter the fall wearing T-shirts while we fish in glorious weather conditions, catching walleye, bass, muskies, pike, perch and crappies; then a few short weeks later, we're bundled up in parkas as we head out onto the ice. If you understand how environmental factors influence fish behaviours at this time of the year, however, you can use that knowledge to your advantage to catch more and bigger fish.



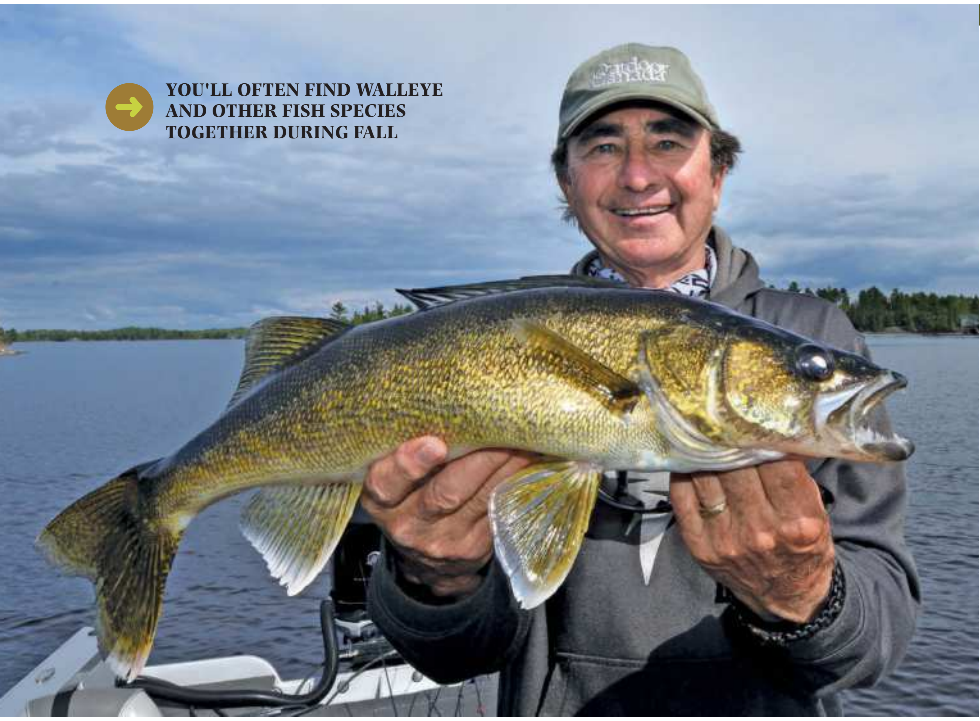
GORD PYZER

WATCH THE SEASONAL CHANGES

Imagine the profound effect fall's same extreme weather changes have on the fish. After all, fish are *poikilothermous*, meaning they are cold-blooded in nature, and therefore their internal body temperature stays the same as the temperature of the water in which they swim. As a result, they enter harvest time feeding and socializing in near optimal conditions, then leave it in many cases in a semi-comatose state of hibernation. How's that for a change? It's as though they have to deal with a sudden Ice Age every year.

Fall is also the time of turnover, when the lake literally flips upside down. At the beginning of the season, we find the warmest water in the shallows along shore and on the surface, and the coldest water at the bottom of the lake. At the end of the season, however, the conditions are completely reversed. Just as profound is the fact that the oxygen levels in the deepest parts of the lake are suddenly rejuvenated and fully restored, after steadily decreasing since the spring, often precipitously and to dangerously low levels.

In the wake of this massive upheaval, warm- and cool-water species of fish—including walleye, sauger, bass, northern pike, black crappies and yellow perch—will follow their preferred living conditions and head progressively deeper as water temperatures grow colder in the shallows. And just as predictably, cold-water fish such as lake trout, whitefish and ciscoes will ascend from the abyss.



YOU'LL OFTEN FIND WALLEYE AND OTHER FISH SPECIES TOGETHER DURING FALL

TRACK FISH MOVEMENTS

I like to think of the fish adapting to autumn's shifting conditions as though they were riding an escalator in a big store—early in autumn, warm-water fish ride the escalator down one level from the top floor, while cold-water species hop on in the basement and head up a level. By mid-fall, you'll typically find all of the fish crowded together on the same middle floor. When that happens, you can be certain the water temperature has become consistent from top to bottom, and that the fish—predators and prey alike—have found the zone of maximum stability, food and comfort.

I remember one trip last autumn when I hit this peak perfectly. It was a gorgeous blue-sky afternoon with the sun shining brightly and the wind subdued. I was fishing in my boat in about 30 feet of water, wending my way along the edge of a large shelf that extended out from shore. At the outer perimeter, the shelf suddenly broke steeply, like a toboggan run down to the main lake basin. There was also a scattering of isolated boulders and wheelbarrow-sized rocks near the rim that the fish were nuzzling up against.

I fired out a 5½-inch swimbait attached to a ¾-ounce bullet-head jig, let it sink, then started a relatively aggressive retrieve, lifting the bait and making brief pauses while keeping it close to the bottom. You can only do that when you tie on a much heavier jig than normal—I'll routinely use a full ounce—so you're not forced to slow down and feel for bottom.

As I reeled the thumping paddletail back to the boat, I felt a sharp tug and set the hook smartly into the mouth of a thick-bodied, 24-inch walleye. After releasing the fish, I fired the lure back to the isolated rocks on the edge of the structure, let it plummet again on slack line and started the same retrieve. Only this time, I hadn't made three turns of the reel handle before I felt another fish, this time a beautiful four-pound smallmouth, take the bait.

Now, are you ready for this? As I prepared to make my third cast, I happened to glance down at the sonar screen and spot a fish suspended a foot or two off the bottom, directly under the transducer. I reckoned it was another smallmouth that had followed in the one I'd just released, so I quickly opened up my bail and dropped the jig over the side of the boat. It was no bass. Instead, a 25-pound lake trout tried to rip the rod from my hands. In three casts, I'd caught a warm-water, cool-water and cold-water fish using the same bait on the same spot.

SWIMBAITS ARE EFFECTIVE FOR CATCHING A VARIETY OF LATE-AUTUMN FISH





FOR FALL CRAPPIES (AND PERCH, WALLEYE AND BASS), TARGET HARD, FLAT BOTTOMS

HIT ROCK BOTTOM

Those exceptional catches highlight another key fall fishing principle: With few exceptions, it's nearly always about the bottom. In the other three seasons, we routinely have to contend with fish that suspend high up in the water column, off the edges of structure in open water or close to the surface. Most days in the fall, however, it pays to be on or near the bottom. And the process accelerates as the water temperature continues dropping and the season advances, in both highly structured lakes with an abundance of underwater points, sunken reefs and submerged shoals, as well as lakes shaped like cast iron skillets. I will often search out the latter type of lake—or sections within highly structured waters that resemble them—because fall fish are so delightfully easy to pattern.

Here's a good example of that. I live on northwestern Ontario's Lake of the Woods, one of the most amazing bodies of water on the planet. Measuring 404,000 hectares in size, it has more than 100,000 kilometres of shoreline, 14,000 islands and another 28,000 submerged islands just inches below the surface. It's a structure angler's dream come true, yet many of my favourite fall walleye, bass, perch and black crappie locations resemble dinner plates. In fact, I search for sections of the lake where the bottom is as flat as a pancake in 24 to 32 feet.

Now, you might expect the fish would be easy to find in such places, sticking out on your sonar unit. That's partially true, especially on those warm, sunny, bluebird-type days. But most of the time, I'm not even looking for fish when I slowly criss-cross the flats monitoring my sonar unit, which I set to the split-screen mode to show traditional 2-D sonar and down- or side-imaging. Instead, I stare at the monitor looking for anything—absolutely anything—that's different on the bottom. A dining room-size patch of pebbles, stones or coarse gravel is a godsend. So, too, is a transition from hard sand to soft muck.

In short, I'm not looking for a change in depth, but rather a variation in the composition of the bottom, which attracts fish like a magnet. With 2-D sonar, you'll notice the strength of the return on your chartplotter is suddenly richer, redder, thicker and bolder when you cross over such an area. It's even more visible when you spot it on down- and side-imaging modes. »

BONUS TIPS

SCOUT FOR WINTER

WHEN I HEAD out in my boat during late fall, I always carry a handheld GPS unit or the same Helix Ice chartplotter I use for ice fishing. Then when I come across a great walleye, crappie, yellow perch, black crappie or pike spot, I punch in the precise waypoint so I can easily find the fish again at first ice.

JIG TIME

FALL PRESENTATIONS TEND to concentrate on casting and trolling, but don't forget to jig. Bass, walleye, perch and crappies gather up and concentrate in ever-bigger schools as fall progresses, so vertical jigging (or drop-shotting) can be a superb technique. Likewise, if your favourite muskie and pike spots fail to produce after you pick them apart by casting, never leave without first jigging a Bondy Bait.

MANUFACTURERS (LURES); GORD PYZER (ANGLERS)



LATE-FALL SMALLMOUTH BASS WILL OFTEN PICK UP A LURE OFF THE BOTTOM

THROW BLADES AND SPOONS

Once I find a patch of gravel or a change in the bottom composition, I'll drop a marker buoy over top of it, then back away so I can cover it thoroughly with a series of casts. When fishing for walleye and smallmouth bass under this scenario, the two lures I tie on most often are ¾-ounce blade baits and spoons such as the William's Bully. The key characteristic of both lures is that they're compact and heavy, so they get down to the bottom quickly when you briskly pump them, pause and let them sink. When you do that as fast as you can early in the season, almost every fish that slams your lure will be a smallmouth bass. Pause just a fraction of a second longer on the drop, however, and a disproportionate number of your catches will be walleye. It's uncanny.

As fall evolves and the water temperature continues its relentless dive, I change my retrieve. Now I quickly pull up the blade bait a foot or so, just fast enough that I can feel it vibrate, then stop and let it fall back to the bottom. I do the same thing with the spoon, but pop it up much more subtly with the rod tip before letting it fall back to the bottom. On some days, a rhythmic hop-fall-hop pattern will produce the most action; on other days, you'll discover that the fish want the lure to fall and lie on the sand, pebble, stone or muck bottom as though it were a dead baitfish. It's simply amazing how bass and walleye will not hesitate to pick up the lure and hold it for an interminably long time in their mouths. My only explanation for this is that the frigid water has dulled their senses.



GET DOWN DEEP QUICKLY WITH A COMPACT, HEAVY SPOON SUCH AS A BULLY



WHEN NORTHERNS AND THEIR PREFERRED PREY CROSS PATHS IN THE FALL, GET READY

TIE ON BIG BAITS

In order to catch late-season trophy fish, I also believe you have to cast and troll much bigger baits. That's especially so when I'm fishing for muskies and pike. Separated by the thermocline in the summer from the most plentiful and preferred forage in the lake—ciscoes, whitefish and even lake trout—these big toothy critters finally cross paths with their favourite food in the fall. Then it's lights-out crazy action.

What happens is that the muskies and northerns hop onto the escalator going down to the 18- to 25-foot range, where the conditions are stable. At the very same time, ciscoes, whitefish and lake trout will ride the escalator up to the same level to stage during the day and lay eggs at night on hard-bottomed structures, such as underwater points, rock piles and shoals. It's Mother Nature's way of providing an incredible, one-time seasonal burst of protein for the big pike and muskies as they store energy to get through the coming winter.

Both predator and prey remain faithful to these fall locations for life. So, if you catch big muskies or pike on a specific structure or location in the fall, you can be sure to find them there again the next fall. The same goes if you see ciscoes, whitefish or lake trout spawning on a particular location—you can be assured that some of the biggest muskies and pike in the lake are roaming the outskirts and terrorizing the neighbourhood.



CASTING AND TROLLING BIGGER BAITS DOES THE TRICK FOR LATE-SEASON TROPHIES

BONUS TIPS

MIGRATION MATTERS

A UNIQUE FALL walleye pattern emerges in large waterbodies such as Lake Ontario, Lake of the Woods and Lake Winnipeg when the fish migrate long distances to overwinter close to where they will spawn during the spring. The fishing simply gets better and better as more and more walleye arrive.

COLOUR MATCHING

CAST OR TROLL any colour of lure or bait in the fall for big toothy critters, so long as its primary hue is white, silver or gold. Those are the turn-on tints that best resemble ciscoes, whitefish and lakers.

TARGET THE SPOTS ON THE SPOT

This defining late-fall homing instinct of both predator and prey is the reason I smile whenever someone says you have to troll during the fall in order to catch monster muskies and pike. That's simply not true—casting is routinely a much more productive strategy if you know from past experience where to concentrate your efforts. Here's a case in point. More than 20 years ago, I guided the vice-president of the largest U.S. chapter of Muskies Inc. to his personal best muskie; last year, my grandson Liam caught his biggest muskie on the very same spot. It's a single, barely submerged rock the size of a compact car—if your cast misses the edge of it by more than three feet, you may as well be fishing in another watershed. If you hit it precisely on the northwesterly back side when a brisk southeasterly wind is blowing, however, you better have a good grip on your rod. I can show you another dozen spots where fall fish predictably lock on to similarly small features.

With all that in mind, I always stress two things when it comes to fishing for gargantuan late-season muskies and pike. First, concentrate your efforts on the lakes, rivers, reservoirs, pits and ponds that you know like the back of your hand. Second, troll new waters to find the fish, but then cast to catch them. Trolling is a fantastic fall strategy to help you catch fish that are moving from one spot to another, but you won't hook any giants on those spot-on-the-spot locations by trolling. They are just too shallow, too specific, too complex and too small, and that's part of what makes fall fishing so challenging—and so awesomely rewarding. OC

ALSO SEE FISHING EDITOR GORD PYZER'S COLUMN ON THE FIGURE EIGHT TECHNIQUE TO CATCH FOLLOWER MUSKIES (PAGE 24).



CASTING IS THE BEST WAY TO CATCH GIANT FALL MUSKIES ON SPECIFIC SMALL SPOTS

MANUFACTURERS (LURES); GORD PYZER (ANGLERS)



BANG FOR YOUR BUCK

FOR HUNTING DEER IN CANADA, THESE 10 TOP CARTRIDGES MORE THAN PROMISE TO GET THE JOB DONE

BY KEN BAILEY

COKE OR PEPSI? Nature or nurture? The Beatles or the Rolling Stones? Some debates over what is better rage on forever because there are no easy or widely accepted resolutions. And though we understand we'll never get everybody to agree with our opinions, we love to engage in the discussions. Within the hunting community, one of those long-standing debates revolves around what is the best cartridge for hunting deer.

What makes a good deer-hunting round? To begin with, it must be accurate. Accuracy means different things to different people, but if you can put three shots inside a two-inch circle at 100 metres, that's plenty of accuracy for most deer-hunting scenarios.

An effective deer cartridge should also have a reasonably flat trajectory. The faster a bullet leaves the barrel, and the more aerodynamic it is, the farther it will go before succumbing to gravity's pull. But higher velocities usually mean increased recoil, and that trade-off can't be ignored—if you flinch when squeezing the trigger, you lose accuracy. That's why the best deer rounds have manageable recoil—hitting the target where you want to trumps velocity every time.

Your deer cartridge must also have sufficient energy to complete its task. A common opinion is that a terminal energy of 1,000 foot-pounds is sufficient to cleanly kill a deer. That threshold is most often a product of the distance to your deer; at some point, every cartridge and bullet combination will fall below it.

Considering all that criteria, here—in no particular order—are what I believe to be 10 of the very best cartridges now available for hunting deer. And as a bonus, I've married each round to a suitable rifle, making for 10 deer-hunting dream combos. Let the campfire debates begin.

.30-06 SPRINGFIELD



PERFECT PAIRING:
RUGER HAWKEYE HUNTER

WHY NOT BEGIN with what is arguably the most popular hunting cartridge in Canada? While the .30-06 Springfield is widely acknowledged as the do-it-all cartridge for North American big game, some hardcore deer-hunting enthusiasts might suggest it's really not an ideal deer round—it requires a long-action rifle that can be unwieldy in blinds, treestands and many deer haunts. Plus, its bullet energy is arguably more than what's required, the recoil can be on the high side, and there are simply many alternatives that are better suited for deer.

But how can you argue with success? I love the .30-06 because it's ideal for the one-rifle hunter, ammunition is widely available and it's loaded with virtually every bullet imaginable. It's also chambered in nearly every rifle made. You could argue that, in an era when long-range hunting is popular, the .30-06 is somewhat limited, but I would suggest it shoots flat enough for all but the most wide-open landscapes. Sure, maybe the venerable .30-06 isn't sexy these days, but at some point we all come to understand that dependability and reliability are more important than fashion. »



MARK RAYCROFT (DEER); MANUFACTURERS (RIFLES)

.30-30 WINCHESTER



PERFECT PAIRING:
WINCHESTER MODEL 94

IF THERE'S ONE cartridge that's taken more deer in Canada over the years than the .30-06, undoubtedly it's the .30-30. And if the .30-06 is your father's cartridge, the .30-30 probably brings Grandpa's rifle to mind. Originally developed in the 1890s as one of the first cartridges designed specifically for smokeless powder, the .30-30 features ballistics that are pretty anemic by today's standards. Nonetheless, .30-30 ammunition still makes the top-10 list each year in terms of centrefire ammo sales. Clearly, many hunters still consider it a fine deer cartridge.

The .30-30 certainly has its limitations, its effective range being the most notable. Fortunately, modern ammo such as Hornady's LEVERevolution has breathed new life into this old standby, extending its effective range and improving accuracy. Most .30-30s are chambered in compact, quick-handling lever-action rifles, and that helps explain why—after all these years—it remains such a popular cartridge, especially for still- or stand-hunting deer in dense cover.

6.5 CREEDMOOR



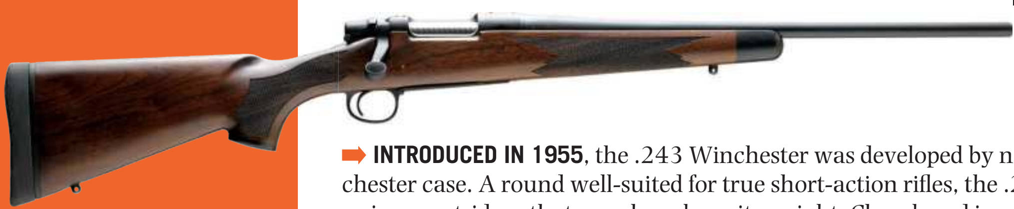
PERFECT PAIRING:
BROWNING X-BOLT
WESTERN HUNTER

THE 6.5 CREEDMOOR arrived in the hunting world with a bang in 2007, and it has only increased in popularity since then. It was originally developed as a cartridge for competition rifle shooting, but its success in that arena quickly led to it being adopted as a hunting round. So, what's all the fuss about? First, as you might assume from its pedigree, it's an inherently accurate round. And while you don't need eye-of-the-needle accuracy in most deer-hunting situations, every extra inch of increased accuracy is worth whatever it costs when you're shooting in wide-open country or at extended distances.

The heavy-for-calibre bullets loaded in this cartridge mean high sectional densities, and that translates into increased penetration, especially at long ranges. The 0.264-inch bullets also boast a high ballistic coefficient, meaning greater resistance to drag and wind drift. The low recoil, roughly 35 per cent less than that of the .270 Winchester, is another popular feature of this trendy round.

Add it all up and the 6.5 Creedmoor brings to the table everything you want in a long-range deer cartridge. Many of its most favourable qualities can't be appreciated when hunting deer at ranges inside 300 metres, but beyond that, it's easy to understand why it has gained so much favour in such a short time.

.243 WINCHESTER



PERFECT PAIRING:
REMINGTON MODEL SEVEN

INTRODUCED IN 1955, the .243 Winchester was developed by necking down a .308 Winchester case. A round well-suited for true short-action rifles, the .243 Win. is one of those unique cartridges that punches above its weight. Chambered in many lightweight and compact rifles, it's considered one of the best deer-hunting cartridges for small-framed hunters, including youngsters and women.

But make no mistake, this isn't a kid's cartridge. The .243 Win. has remained popular for more than 60 years because it performs—it kills deer, plain and simple. Like its parent, the .308 Win., the .243 Win. is an extremely accurate round. It's also flat shooting and has very mild recoil. For deer hunting, the .243 Win. is generally loaded with bullets in the 90- to 100-grain range, carrying a minimum downrange energy of 1,000 foot-pounds out to 300 metres or so. The go-to rifle of one of my deer-hunting mentors was a Browning BAR in .243 Win. I watched enough animals go down with one shot to see first-hand how effective this underappreciated cartridge is as a deer round.

.270 WINCHESTER



PERFECT PAIRING:
SAKO 85 FINNLIGHT II

MY FIRST HUNTING rifle was a Remington 760 pump-action chambered in .270 Win. Like many others of my age at the time, I was greatly influenced by the writings of Jack O'Connor, who heaped praise on this cartridge as being ideal for game ranging from pronghorns to elk. I can't really remember how many deer I shot with my .270, but it was more than a few. I even took it to Africa on my first safari, and while carrying a pump-action rifle raised a few eyebrows, the .270 Win. bullets performed as well on kudu and impala as they did on North American game.

Designed on a .30-06 case necked down to 0.277 inches (instead of 0.308 inches), the .270 Win. pushes its smaller diameter bullets at higher velocities with a flatter trajectory and less recoil than the .30-06. The downrange energy doesn't quite match up, but it's capable of nearly 1,500 foot-pounds of energy out to 500 metres. That makes it a capable round for practically all deer-hunting scenarios.

Another one of those rounds considered by some as yesterday's cartridge, the .270 Win. carries more energy out to 500 metres, with slightly higher velocities and nearly identical wind drift, as the 6.5 Creedmoor. And while it has greater recoil, the .270 Win. is easily tolerable for most hunters.

.25-06 REMINGTON



PERFECT PAIRING:
SAVAGE 110 STORM

AS WITH SEVERAL other cartridges, the .25-06 Remington can trace its lineage directly back to the .30-06. In fact, it's built on a .30-06 case necked down to 0.257 inches. For difficult-to-understand reasons, the cartridge has never really earned the fame it has deserved since its inception in 1969, despite the superb performance. As a result, it can fairly be considered the Rodney Dangerfield of deer cartridges. In the interests of full disclosure, I must admit to having taken more deer with the .25-06 Rem. than with any other cartridge; my favourite deer rifle is a semi-custom rig based on a Remington 700 action and chambered in .25-06 Rem. So, while I'm admittedly a little biased, it's a bias backed up by in-the-field experience.

The .25-06 has a flatter trajectory than the 6.5 Creedmoor or .270 Win., and it can carry more than 1,000 foot-pounds of energy out to 500 metres. At the same time, its wind drift at 400 metres is less than an inch more than the wind drift of either of those two cartridges. Plus, its recoil is nearly identical to that of the easy-to-shoot 6.5 Creedmoor.

A common criticism of the .25-06 Rem., however, is the relatively light bullet weights, commonly in the 115-grain range. Many hunters prefer heavier bullets, especially on very large deer at extended ranges. That concern may be valid, but few deer cartridges are better suited at practical distances in the wide-open West than the .25-06 Rem.

7MM REM. MAGNUM



PERFECT PAIRING:
BERGARA B-14
WILDERNESS HUNTER

HUNTERS TEND TO either love or hate the 7mm Rem. Mag. Those who hate it generally cite recoil as one of their primary issues, and there's no denying this round's recoil is roughly 10 to 20 per cent higher than that of a .30-06—a level some shooters find unmanageable. If you can tolerate the recoil, however, you'll be hard-pressed to find a more effective cartridge for hunting large-bodied deer at extended ranges.

Introduced in 1962, the 7mm Rem. Mag. is likely the most popular belted magnum cartridge in North America, if not the world. It's one of the few rounds considered an all-round cartridge, effective on nearly every game species in Canada except, perhaps, the largest polar and grizzly bears. It's most often compared to the .30-06, although it can boast more velocity, greater downrange energy, a higher ballistic coefficient and sectional density, and a flatter trajectory.

Some hunters suggest the 7mm Rem. Mag. is too much gun for deer, but can your deer ever be too dead? It's undoubtedly more at home in the open West than in the forests of eastern Canada, but for hunters seeking a cartridge capable of taking down more than just deer, they can do a lot worse than consider this round. »

.308 WINCHESTER



PERFECT PAIRING: KIMBER HUNTER

MORE POPULAR IN eastern Canada than in the West, the .308 Win. is a victim of being a somewhat plain Jane cartridge. But what it may lack in sexiness, it more than makes up for in effectiveness. And while the cartridge is often given short shrift when compared to the .30-06, the differences are minor. What is significant, however, is that the .308 is inherently more accurate, albeit for technical reasons that go beyond my understanding. What's more, because its case length is half an inch shorter than that of the .30-06, it can be chambered in short-action bolt guns, lever-action rifles and modern sporting rifles built on AR-style platforms.

The fact the .308 Win. can be chambered in more compact rifles undoubtedly explains why it's more popular in the East, where deer hunting is more likely to take place in the tight quarters of dense woodlands. Deer hunters who regularly shoot this round can't be convinced there's a better alternative, and it's hard to argue with them. Plus, the .308 Win. fits nicely in that category of one cartridge that can do it all.

7MM-08 REMINGTON



PERFECT PAIRING: TIKKA T3X LITE

ALTHOUGH WILDCATTERS PLAYED with the .308 Win. necked down to 7mm (0.284 inches) in the late 1950s, it wasn't until 1980 that Remington brought it mainstream. Since then, this round has gained a steady and loyal following among deer hunters. Some even suggest the 7mm is the perfect calibre for hunting deer of all sizes, nestled between the "too big" .30 calibres and the "not quite big enough" 0.264-inch and 0.277-inch cartridges. I don't necessarily subscribe to that notion, but if you do—and the thought of a 7mm magnum scares you—the 7mm-08 is right up your alley.

Shooting a 140-grain pill at roughly 2,800 fps, the 7mm-08 Rem. carries 1,000 foot-pounds of energy out to 500 metres. That's plenty of speed and energy for any deer out beyond the range where most of us should be shooting, and it does it all with minimal recoil. Owing to the fact it's a true short-action cartridge, the 7mm-08 Rem. can be chambered in compact rifles, making it ideal for small-statured shooters. This is simply one of those great deer cartridges that not enough shooters consider when it's time to buy.

.45-70 GOVERNMENT



PERFECT PAIRING: MARLIN MODEL 1895

ALRIGHT, I GET IT. This isn't a cartridge most hunters think about when campfire discussions about ideal deer cartridges arise. It's an old round, tracing its roots back to 1873 and the U.S. military, and with its rainbow-like trajectory, it's admittedly not a long-range tack driver. Plus, the recoil can be a little much for some. Despite such drawbacks, this old warhorse is arguably the ideal choice for deer hunters who want an effective brush gun. It's most commonly available in lever rifles, which are well suited for tight quarters.

Typical velocities for this cartridge's standard 300-grain bullets are just under 1,900 fps, with a muzzle energy of 2,355 foot-pounds. And while the .45-70 carries deer-sufficient energy out to 300 metres, its trajectories suggest it's best suited for deer closer than 200 metres, with 150 metres a more practical maximum. Of course, those distances are irrelevant when you're hunting in the thick stuff.

Where the .45-70 does shine is in its ability to quickly drop deer. Best of all, the heavy bullets travelling at moderate speeds reduce the amount of ruined, blood-shot meat you'll get. And for most deer hunters, it's all about the venison anyway.

ALSO SEE HUNTING EDITOR KEN BAILEY'S COLUMN THIS ISSUE ON PARALLAX ERROR (PAGE 27).


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YOUNG GUNS



LEARNING TO SHOOT IS STEP ONE FOR YOUNG HUNTERS

A step-by-step approach to successfully getting kids excited about hunting

BY KEVIN WILSON


KEVIN WILSON

KEEPING LOW TO the ground, my 14-year-old daughter, Chelsea, followed her mom, matching her step for step. We'd spotted a black bear foraging along a trail 250 yards away, and both the cover and wind direction were ideal for a stalk. Approaching to within 80 yards of the bear, the two sat down, quietly extended the legs on a bipod and prepared for the shot as the bruin continued grazing toward them.

Having had plenty of pre-season trigger time, Chelsea was confident in her shooting abilities, and so were her mom, Heather, and I. When the bear was 50 yards out, Chelsea locked her crosshairs on its chest and squeezed the trigger on her .243 Win. The bear rolled, got up, stumbled and collapsed after a few short steps. The smile on Chelsea's face said it all—she had just taken her first-ever big game animal (that's the proud moment, pictured here).

Introducing kids to hunting—and getting them to stick with it—requires a careful approach. Your focus can't be solely on shooting a limit or finding a trophy. You must also make it an enjoyable experience, all the while emphasizing ethical behaviour and the proper way to do things. That means prioritizing safety and explaining the reasons for hunting. It means teaching young proteges everything from how to secure landowner permission and locate game to how to take the shot and prepare their harvest for the table. Based on the experiences my wife and I had introducing our two daughters to hunting, here's how best you can get your kids in on the action, too.

» STARTING POINT

BEFORE YOUNG PEOPLE can head afield as hunters, they must first learn to shoot and earn a government hunter education certificate. In Canada, there are age restrictions on hunting, but not on shooting firearms or bows, so it's up to parents or guardians to determine when a young person is ready to give it a try. With close supervision and instruction, it's been my experience that many young people are ready long before reaching legal hunting age. Despite their slight physical stature, my two daughters were mature enough to understand instruction, recognize consequences and follow safety rules by the age of 10. My youngest, Paige, shot her first duck when she was 13, and had the unique privilege of taking a springbok at age 10 in Africa, where there is no minimum age for hunters (see photo on page 49).

» SAFETY FIRST

HEATHER AND I have always been strict about safety, but we also believe that—as a precursor to hunting—shooting should be a fun activity. Still, you should always begin by teaching the extreme importance of firearms safety. Young kids don't have the life experience to understand consequences, and for that reason, they can be unpredictable.

Along with having your young shooters always wear eye and ear protection, they must also learn to keep control of the muzzle direction and treat every firearm as though it were loaded. As well, they must always keep their finger away from the trigger until they're ready to shoot, use the safety (but not rely on it) and be certain of their target. There are no do-overs with firearms, we routinely tell our daughters, so mistakes simply cannot happen.

» SKILLS PROGRESSION

YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD start with »

the most basic of shooting steps at close range, then progress to longer distances and larger calibres. With both firearms and bows, the first step is proper form and shooting technique. After mastering basic shooting skills, kids can advance to more technical shooting. Never force them to shoot a firearm or bow, or progress beyond their comfort level. It always needs to be their decision. (See “Making the shot,” next page.)

» HUNT PREPARATION

I CAN’T STRESS enough the importance of properly preparing young people on what to expect in the field before they participate in an actual hunt. For hunting big game, that includes teaching them about everything from identifying sign to the importance of feeding, bedding and staging areas. It also includes telling them how and why you set up stands or blinds in certain areas.

Likewise, for hunting waterfowl you need to explain which crops the birds feed on, where they roost, how to set up decoy spreads and blinds, and what times of the day to hunt. For upland hunting, you must teach youngsters about shooting zones, and how to respond to flushing birds and shoot safely over working dogs.

It’s equally important to teach kids ethical hunting practices. That includes when to (and not to) shoot, etiquette in the field and respect for landowners and their property. They also need to know the provincial and federal regulations that will further guide their actions in the field.





STAY CLOSE TO YOUNG HUNTERS WHILE IN THE FIELD



PREPPING GAME FOR THE TABLE IS PART OF THE LEARNING PROCESS



Since my daughters come from a hunting family, the transition from observers to actual hunters came naturally for them. If you’re mentoring young people unfamiliar with the hunting culture, however, it can be helpful to introduce them to it in small doses. Communicate realistic expectations and have conversations about why we hunt and the skills involved, as well as about hunting ethics and responsibilities.

Also involve kids in the planning. If you’re deer hunting, for example, have them play an active role in finding good ground. Have them join you as you approach landowners, look at aerial photos and go on pre-season scouting trips. Explain the importance of good landowner relations and following landowner requests when it comes closing gates, vehicle use and what animals you can shoot, among other stipulations.

» FIRST HUNTS

AFTER ALL THE preparation is completed, it’s time for young hunters to actually head afield with a gun or bow in hand, and put everything they've learned into action. Whether that first hunt is for big game, waterfowl or upland game birds, I strongly recommend you walk or sit right beside beginners to coach them through the experience. Offering careful correction, complimenting safe behaviour, and otherwise monitoring how they carry, handle and shoot the firearm or bow helps them develop skills that will last a lifetime. When the big moment comes, you can also offer guidance about when to raise their firearm or bow, and when to take the shot.

When hunting waterfowl with youngsters, you may be shooting from a layout or upright blind. Either way, review the safety rules with them before the shoot, ensure they know their shooting zones, and make it a priority to answer questions before, during and after the hunt. When wingshooting, I find it’s best to make young apprentices the main shooters so they can get the first shots.

It’s also useful to have kids go through the same progression you use when instructing shooters on a skeet or trap range. Have them follow incoming birds with an empty gun and dry fire when they feel they are on the bird. Once they are comfortable doing that, load a single live round and follow the same steps. When I have young people do that, they inevitably see immediate success. Once they’re comfortable, have them load multiple rounds and give it a try. Following that strategy, I once had a 15-year-old who had never hunted before take his full limit of eight greenheads.

For young bowhunters, it can be helpful to join them in a blind or in a second stand placed in the same tree. Again, that lets you monitor, correct or otherwise coach them in real time. I’m a firm believer in setting young bowhunters up for success by

placing blinds or stands for 15- to 20-yard shots.

Aside from shot placement, one of the most important things you can teach young bowhunters is to wait at least 45 minutes before following up on any good shot, and longer if the shot is less than ideal. And, of course, show them how to follow the blood trail to retrieve their downed game.

» PREPARING GAME

TEACHING APPRENTICE HUNTERS to properly retrieve, clean, package and cook wild game is just as important as the hunt itself. One of my proudest mentoring moments was watching my eldest daughter pluck, eviscerate, wash and prepare her first duck for the roaster. After seasoning and baking the bird, it was a defining moment in her young life to see us sit down as a family and enjoy the delectable meal she had provided.

In the end, mentoring young people to hunt safely and properly—and for the right reasons—is about passing on a legacy. It's *the* way to ensure coming generations adopt our heritage activities and values, and respect our natural resources in the process. OC

KEVIN WILSON AND HIS FAMILY HAVE HUNTED ALL ACROSS THEIR HOME PROVINCE OF ALBERTA.



CONSTANT GUIDANCE IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS WITH YOUTH



MAKING THE SHOT

MY DAUGHTERS ARE now comfortable handling firearms, as well as bows, but it took a gradual, careful approach. Here's how my wife, Heather, and I got them up to speed.

RIMFIRE RIFLES There is simply no better way to teach youngsters to shoot than with a rimfire rifle. Both of my daughters began with a .22 LR, shooting at a variety of paper, metal and swinging targets at close range, typically 20 yards or less. My wife and I always stressed the importance of precision, not squeezing the trigger until they were certain of a safe backdrop, and understanding that a bullet hits exactly where it's aimed. The more my kids went through the motions of safe gun handling, loading, discharging and unloading, the more proficient they became. Eventually, they advanced to shooting 50-yard targets.

It's worth noting my daughters took to shooting straight away. Why? Mostly because my wife and I removed as many limiting factors as possible. Rather than using a shooting bench, for example, we put bipods on their rifles right from day one. The whole point of shooting is accuracy, and a solid rest helps with that. We also took them to a pasture where there was a chance to shoot gophers. If you want to get youngsters hooked, gophers and other little varmints are the answer.

CENTREFIRE RIFLES After mastering the rimfire, the girls advanced to a small-calibre centrefire. The year we went to Africa, my older daughter, Chelsea, was 14 and had already earned her hunter education certificate, so she trained with a .243 Winchester. Paige, who was four years younger and weighed barely 80 pounds, was apprehensive about using a centrefire because of the noise and recoil. Helping her through that required several careful steps. With gentle encouragement, we suggested that Mom could sit directly behind her and brace her as she shot. That worked great, and after only five rounds Paige eagerly proclaimed, "I got this mom! I can shoot on my own!"

No, we didn't abandon her altogether at that point. Recognizing the importance of small progressions, we literally kept a hand on Paige's back at first, then gradually moved away with each shot until she felt—and looked—entirely confident. Once they could shoot centrefires, both girls routinely practised out to 125 yards, using both paper targets and image targets of big-game animals with the kill zones clearly outlined.

SHOTGUNS Teaching kids how to handle shotguns is different. The ideal way to start is to have them shoot a lighter gun and load at clay targets. Some people believe in starting kids out with a single-shot break action, but we felt confident our girls could handle more. Instead, they began with an inexpensive Mossberg semi-auto 20-gauge. It was light and smooth, with a short walnut stock, making it ideal for youngsters. As with their skills progression with rifles, the girls followed a similar routine with the shotgun and took to it quickly.

COMPOUND BOWS Begin by teaching young archers proper form. Then instill in them an understanding that precision and knowing their limits are imperative. Give them age- and size-appropriate equipment to use, and teach them how important it is to have properly tuned gear. As with firearms training, start developing their skills at close distances, only advancing to longer shots once they are ready.

Since shot placement is so important, I think 3-D targets offer the best all-around simulations for bowhunting. You also have to teach new shooters that broadheads kill by hemorrhaging alone, which reinforces the importance of heart and lung shots. As I did with my daughters, I encourage new bowhunters to limit their shots to distances of 30 yards or less in actual hunting situations.

The Dirty Dozen

12 common mistakes that can totally @#$%&! your duck hunt—and how to avoid them in the first place

By Mike Hungle
Illustration by Dave Whamond



OVER THE YEARS, I've been fortunate enough to hunt ducks across North America with some of the continent's best waterfowlers, including outfitters, hunting TV hosts, call makers, decoy manufacturers and ammunition company reps. Having spent time afield with such hardcore waterfowlers—they earn their livings from hunting—I've come to realize it was often my own mistakes that spoiled some of my previous hunts, or at least made them less successful than they could have been.

Thankfully, I've also learned that most duck-hunting mistakes can be easily fixed once they're identified. Often, it's just a matter of paying attention to the small details. To help save you some tough times afield, here are the 12 most common ways to screw up your duck hunt, complete with advice on making sure they don't happen to you.

1 ARRIVE LATE



Ducks will often be in the air and buzzing your decoys right at legal shooting time. Typically, the period from a half-hour before sunrise to shortly after sunrise will offer the best action. So, if »


QUACK! QUACK!
QUAAACK!
SNAP

you're still setting up decoys or running a boat off the water or a vehicle off the field, you're going to miss out on this action.

When figuring out what time to head out from your duck camp, remember that jobs such as hooking up a trailer, walking back to the spread after parking a vehicle or brushing blinds add time to your pre-hunt activities. And to make it easier to get out the door on time, start preparing the night before. Simple things such as setting an alarm clock, packing a snack, preparing the coffee maker, laying out your clothes, planning your route and putting your vehicle keys in a visible place can help make sure you're not late.



2 IGNORE WHAT THE BIRDS ARE DOING

Generally, when ducks are relaxed and resting on a marsh, they will often spread out to loaf. When they're nervous, however, they'll often swim into a tight bunch to take flight in one big group if necessary. If they're feeding in a dry field, on the other hand, ducks will be aggressive and congregate on the best feeding spot, spreading out only when the pickings are slim and they must search for food.

With all that in mind, it's imperative to arrange your decoys in the same formation the birds were in when you saw them while scouting. If you create a scenario that otherwise resembles nervous or scared ducks, or suggests there isn't a prime food source, the incoming birds will shun your spread, leaving you to wonder what went wrong.

3 DON'T CREATE A LANDING ZONE

When you have guests over to your house for dinner, chances are you tell them where to park when they arrive. In a duck-hunting situation, think of the ducks as your guests and create an inviting landing zone for



them among the decoys. If you don't have a landing zone in your spread, the birds will either flare or slide off and land wide, short or to one side of your spread. If that happens, the shooting opportunities will be poor to non-existent.

When setting up your decoys, therefore, make a J- or V-shaped spread to ensure you leave an open hole for the birds to land in. Also make sure the landing zone is within close proximity to your blinds, allowing you to enjoy some close-range shooting opportunities.

4 SET OUT UNREALISTIC DECOYS

Ducks are survivors. They have keen eyes and can pick apart a spread while approaching from a distance. So, if your decoys don't look realistic because they're dirty or damaged, or they shine in the sun, the birds will definitely flare. Only use your best decoys when hunting; if you have blocks that are broken or need paint, pull them from the spread or leave them at home until you've taken the time to refurbish them. It's better to have a smaller spread of high-quality decoys than a larger spread with inferior imposters that will scare away the ducks.

Also take care when setting up and putting away your decoys to ensure they don't get muddy or dirty. It's also best to store them in slotted decoy bags to prevent them from grinding against each other and rubbing off paint, leaving behind shiny patches.



5 DON'T ADD MOTION TO YOUR SPREAD

When ducks feed together, they try to get ahead of one another to find the best morsels first. In field scenarios, they hop over each other or waddle ahead to get to the food. When ducks are on the water, they swim and bob, leaving small ripples behind as they change positions.

If a decoy spread doesn't have similar movements, approaching ducks will know something isn't quite right. To add motion to a field spread, set up some of your decoys on field stakes so they turn with the wind. A couple of spinning-wing decoys in the landing zone will also add motion, and give the impression of landing ducks.



When hunting on water, meanwhile, tether a decoy with a string you can pull to make it bob in the water. As an added bonus, the resulting ripples will make the neighbouring decoys also move.



6 WEAR IMPROPER CAMO

Camouflage is designed to help hunters blend into their surroundings. So, if you're hunting in a light-coloured field but wearing dark camo, you're going to stick out like a beacon and spook the ducks. On the flip side, if you wear a camo pattern that matches your hunting environment, you'll blend in and the ducks won't notice you.

Thankfully, there are countless camouflage patterns available to match any waterfowling situation you may encounter, from green fields and marshes, to tan-coloured wheat and barley fields, to dark-brown pea and lentil crops. When choosing camouflaged clothing, avoid shiny zippers and buttons, which can alert birds to your presence. And don't forget to wear camo gloves and face masks. Most hunting accessories, such as blind bags and coffee mugs, are also available in camouflage finishes to make them blend in.

7 DON'T STAY STILL

When ducks approach your spread, they're looking for food or drink, or a place to rest. At the same time, they're on the lookout for signs of danger. These keen-eyed critters can spot potential trouble from afar, and when they see unnatural motions, they flare. Prior to your hunt, therefore, delegate one member of your party to be the spotter. Having just one lookout to tell everyone else when ducks are approaching will restrict unnecessary movement, greatly reducing the odds of your set-up getting busted.



Between flights of birds, try to stay hidden in your blind as much as possible. That way, you won't get caught flat-footed by a distant flock. And when retrieving downed birds, do it as quickly as possible and get back into your blind.

8 CALL TOO MUCH

Ducks are very vocal and respond well to calls. When I was hunting with some of the best callers in the game, it became obvious to me that a proficient caller who knows what sounds to make—and when to make them—can work birds right into the landing zone. On the other hand, a hunter who makes calls that are unnatural, too loud or poorly timed will spook ducks.



Hail calls are good for catching the attention of distant ducks. Once the birds are locked in, though, it's time to quit calling and let them approach. If the ducks start to slide off, give them a few clucks and feeding chuckles to entice them closer. As the ducks circle your spread to check things out, don't call if they're head on, as they will pinpoint you. Instead, only call if the birds are upwind on the corners of the spread.

9 DON'T CONTROL YOUR DOG

If your retriever won't listen to commands or remain still when ducks are working the spread, the hunt will be a bust. I've seen many a good outing quickly turn bad when a dog runs erratically among the decoys or swims out of control through the blocks. If that happens, quickly restrain the dog in your blind or, if necessary, walk it back to your vehicle and put it in its kennel.

If it gets to that point, don't get too down—all dogs have good and bad days. If your retriever is young, it simply needs some discipline. It's best to spend time teaching it the routine »





during the off-season, however, not in the field during an actual hunt.

10 USE A DIRTY GUN

During a hunt, dirt, mud or stubble can easily accumulate in your shotgun's action. While this is especially true for semi-autos, I've also seen it happen with a dirty pump-action. Whatever the case, you can't shoot ducks if your firearm is so dirty it jams or won't cycle shells.

To prevent my shotgun from letting me down, I give it a quick cleaning after every outing. I've found that air compressors work great for blowing off dust and grit, allowing me to clean my gun without having to break it down every time. After every three or four hunts, though, I will strip down the gun and give it a more thorough cleaning, then lubricate the action and ensure it works smoothly.



11 DON'T DRESS FOR THE WEATHER

Some of the best duck hunts take place when it's cold and the north wind is howling. But if you find yourself shivering on such a miserable day, the chances are good you'll head home early and miss out on some great action. Even if you stay put, you may have trouble concentrating and making good decisions, or difficulty squeezing the trigger.

To avoid all that, make sure you head out with the proper clothing to match the weather. A wind- and waterproof insulated jacket and matching bibs are invaluable for keeping warm. To further ensure your comfort, dress in layers and wear a warm hat. The beauty of layers is that you can remove them so you don't overheat when setting up decoys or running down cripples, then put them back on so you don't get cold waiting for the ducks to swarm your decoys.



12 SHOOT TOO SOON

Sky busting distant ducks only risks spooking or wounding them, so let incoming birds fly into lethal shooting range before squeezing the trigger. If the ducks fly by out of range, have confidence in your spread and calling abilities and let them make another swing or two.

Also read the birds as they work your spread so you don't miss out on any potential shooting opportunities. If they swing into range and it looks like they're not going to get any closer, for example, call the shot. If they're in range and still working toward your landing zone, however, let them continue and enjoy the show before you shoot.

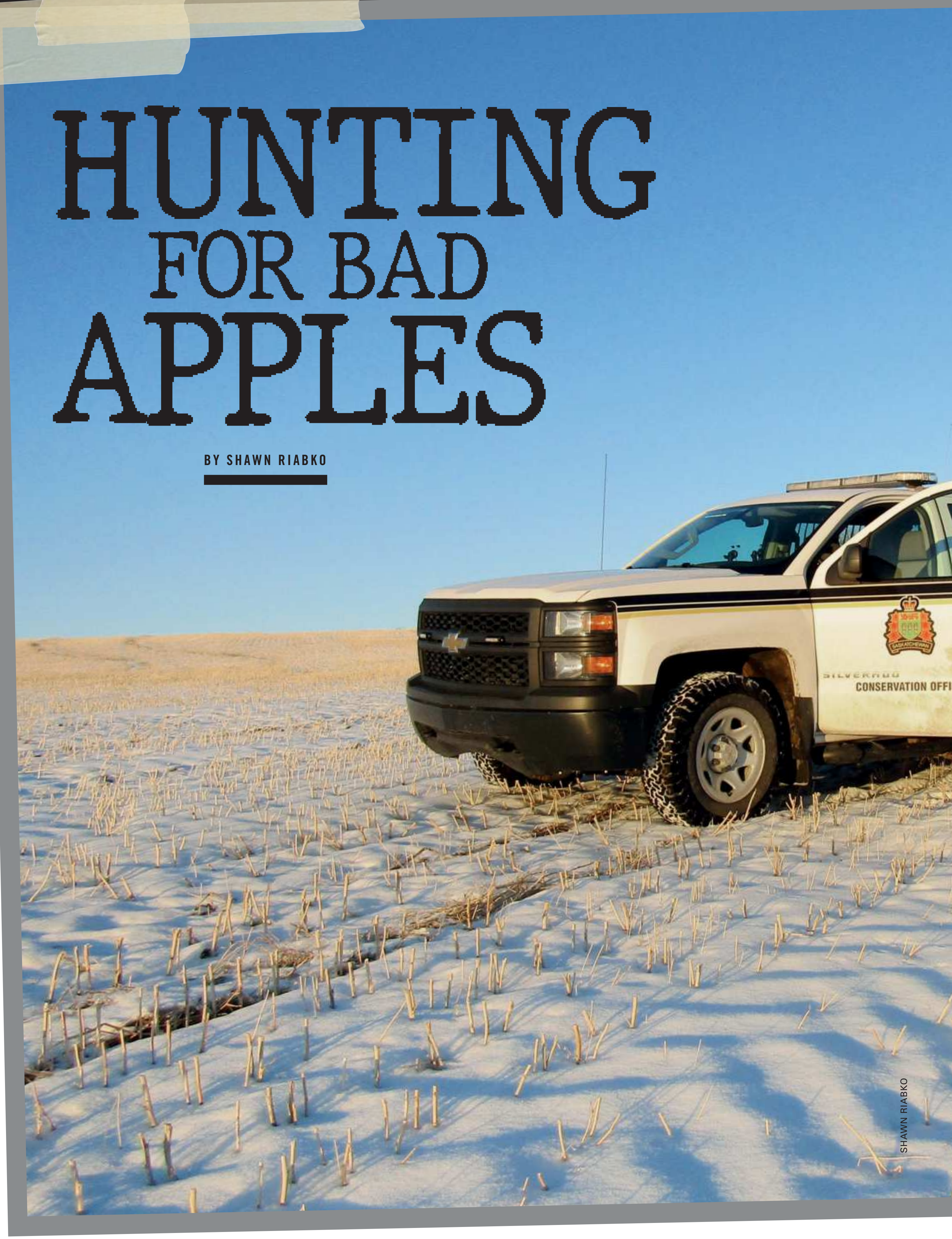
When setting up your spread, look for landmarks to help you gauge how far the birds are from your blind. Another good idea is to strategically place certain decoys as distance markers, telling you when the birds are within shooting range—and giving you the chance to limit out. OC

REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN, CONTRIBUTOR MIKE HUNGLE ALWAYS ENJOYS (MOSTLY) MISTAKE-FREE HUNTS.


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HUNTING FOR BAD APPLES

BY SHAWN RIABKO



SHAWN RIABKO



Three revealing days in the life of a conservation officer during Saskatchewan's busy deer-hunting season



The author keeps a watchful eye (left); confiscating poached deer can be messy work

As southern Saskatchewan's November rifle deer season approaches, I actually get just as excited as the hunters in my region. It's a very busy time for conservation officers such as me, but I love the work and I love being out there catching the select few bad apples who give all hunters a bad name. There are all kinds of hunters, but it's the disrespectful and reckless ones, as well as the poachers, that I hope to catch.

Before the season even begins, my fellow COs and I start planning our patrols and operations. Officers can simply drive around all season long and check hunting licence after hunting licence, and they'll no doubt come across the odd violation. By planning specific operations, however, we increase our effectiveness.

The average hunter complies with the regulations, but there is still value in stopping them to make sure they are following the rules. They share our goal of catching the lawbreakers, and they're comforted knowing we're in the area. And if they see a violation unfold, they're more apt to report it, knowing we will respond quickly and hopefully catch the culprits.

For some hunters, just knowing that conservation officers are in the area is enough to prevent them from »

committing a violation if an opportunity presents itself. If hunters drive around all day and don't see a shooter buck until five minutes after legal light, for example, the thought process of whether to squeeze the trigger certainly changes if they know COs are present.

In trying to catch the true bad guys last season, my planning involved looking back to the 2018 rifle deer season, and making note of the areas where we had the most problems. On the third day of that season in one area, for example, officers found a couple of hunters with a poached deer. They had no tag on it, and were hoping to sneak it home in the dark. They also had a loaded firearm in the vehicle, and were carrying deer tags belonging to other hunters. One of the men wasn't even wearing the proper blaze orange, red or white hunting clothing. As well, officers found a dead deer left in the same location, but they couldn't prove it was the same two hunters who shot it.

Unfortunately, it's pretty tough for an officer to be at the exact spot when a person sees a deer and makes the decision to illegally shoot it. More often than not, we arrive after the fact only to find the truck tracks, drag marks and blood spots where the violation occurred. So, to maximize the chances of catching such people, my partner and I planned some decoy deer operations during the first three days of the season in that same area, as well as in another problem region.

By using a deer decoy, we can make some luck of our own, setting it up on posted land where we know there are deer, but they can't be hunted. Lawful hunters will see the "No Hunting" signs and keep driving, knowing it's illegal to shoot a deer there. Not so the bad actors—they don't care and will shoot anyway. Those are the people we hope to catch with our deer decoy.

Once they're caught in one of these operations, violators sometimes like to throw out words such as "entrapment." The courts have ruled, however, that deer decoy operations are *not* entrapment, and that officers are simply providing an opportunity for someone to knowingly break the law. The decision to take a shot lies solely with the person who does it. Just ask all the lawful hunters who look at the deer decoy and continue on their way.

The season started on a Friday last year, and with all our planning in place, we anticipated a busy first weekend.



Setting up a deer decoy is a key strategy for weeding out reckless, unethical hunters

I don't have any special pre-season traditions like some officers do. I did want to get a handful of things done at home first, however, knowing I would have very little time once the season started. I went to the grocery store and stocked up on groceries to make lunches to eat in the patrol truck. I also bought special snacks such as pepperoni sticks, nuts, potato chips, chocolate bars and cola (patrol truck snacks aren't always the healthiest). Then I did all my laundry so I'd have clean uniforms ready to go. It sometimes only takes loading one dead deer into the back of a truck to turn a freshly cleaned uniform into a blood-stained mess.

Finally, I also tried to clean up our house a little. My wife and I both work full time, and the only time to get housework done is in the evenings after a busy day. I knew I wouldn't be much help to my wife for a little while, so I tried to do what I could. Despite my good intentions, I knew the house would likely turn into a mess again in no time—we have children now aged three and six, and they can quickly create some pretty accurate tornado reenactments.

In Saskatchewan, hunting time begins a half-hour before sunrise and ends a half-hour after sunset. During the earlier hunting seasons, such as September's rifle season for elk, hunting could start at 5:50 a.m. or earlier. During the rifle deer season, however, sunrise comes much later. On the November 15 opener last year, it started at 7:36 a.m. in my area. While it's nice to not have to get up in the middle of the night to start work, my alarm was still set every day for 5:30 a.m., giving me an hour to get ready and geared up to start work at 6:30.

On that first day, my part-

ner and I set up the deer decoy as planned. Throughout the day, only lawful, respectful hunters drove by. That was awesome to see, even though we were hoping to catch some lawbreakers. Forty-five minutes after sunset, we finally decided to take down the decoy because it was too dark to see it in the field.

It seemed we wouldn't be encountering any violations that day, but I was wrong. Just then, we heard gunshots ring out from less than two kilometres away. *Here we go*, I thought. *Someone's shooting at night*. I took off in the direction I heard the shots come from and soon encountered the suspect's vehicle. Not only did he shoot well after dark, he also fired right beside someone's residence.

In Saskatchewan, you can't shoot within 500 metres of occupied buildings without the landowner's permission. The hunter claimed he didn't know the house was there until after he had fired, revealing one main reason why it's illegal to shoot at night. It's one thing to break laws that are put in place to ensure fair chase and the humane dispatch of game, but it's quite another to break laws that are meant to keep both hunters and the public safe. When you shoot in the dark, you don't know what is out there.

Every situation is different, but there is no room for officer discretion involving such safety-based offences. With that, I issued the shooter a $580 fine for hunting at night and a $460 fine for shooting within 500 metres of an occupied building. I also seized his rifle for evidence, and once convicted, he would lose his right to purchase a hunting licence for one year. Those were significant penalties, yes, but the man's actions were a significant safety risk. And so ended day one of the 2019 rifle deer season.

Law-abiding hunters are happy to show COs they are properly licensed and complying with the regulations



For our decoy operation on the second day, my partner and I headed to a different location 20 kilometres to the north. We had originally planned to set up there for the opener, but the "No Hunting" signs posted by the landowner had been torn down. Now he had fresh signs up, however, so we were good to go. We got set up and halfway through the morning—boom!—a shot rang out, hitting the decoy. We responded immediately, rushing in for the takedown with the red and blue lights flashing on our patrol trucks.

That afternoon, we cancelled our plan for another decoy operation at a different location when officers who were helping us received a tip that two moose had been poached on some farmland. You can plan and plan, but the poaching of other species doesn't stop just because deer season is on. The caller said the poachers were cutting up and loading the moose as he spoke, then he took pictures of their trucks and sent them to us. It was all hands on deck at that point to catch these guys.

I can't stress enough how the help of responsible citizens is both crucial and appreciated. It contributes significantly to apprehending suspects. Acting on the tip, two officers went right to the scene hoping to find the poachers, while another officer headed north in case he could intercept the subjects on their way home. I covered the area to the east of the violation in case the poachers tried to escape that way.

I would love to have a great story about how we caught and fined the poachers, but sadly, that's not »



Checking the validity of tags is part of the job

how it played out. The violators obviously saw the complainant taking pictures of their trucks and high-tailed it out of there before the officers arrived. The other COs and I didn't encounter them on the road, either. And unfortunately, the caller on the tip line didn't get the poachers' licence plate numbers. Otherwise, we could have confronted them at their homes. All we could do was hope for some luck, but it didn't come, which is really too bad. It doesn't get much worse than poaching two moose on private farmland.

I spent the remaining few hours of the day checking hunters for deer licences and firearms compliance. After the discouragement of the moose poachers getting away, it was uplifting to talk to good, responsible hunters about their experiences that day.

On the third day, my partner and I planned to run our decoy operation in one location in the morning, then a different locale in the evening. During the morning, only law-abiding hunters drove by, which was good to see, but again, we wanted to catch some lawbreakers. That evening, our luck changed after we set up the decoy off a fairly remote dead-end road with very little traffic.

Along the road was a quarter section of farmland, properly posted on all the corners and approaches, one of which was at the end of the road. There was absolutely no way a hunter could miss seeing the "No Hunting" sign from there, making it a perfect place for the decoy. Again, the goal is to never trick a law-abiding hunter into making a mistake; the goal is to catch those deliberately breaking the law.

Right at sunset, a vehicle drove down the road, into the approach and onto the posted field. They saw our decoy, and the passenger took a shot at it. Once they realized it wasn't a real deer and started to drive away, we moved in with our lights flashing and apprehended them. The driver had a loaded firearm with him in the vehicle, and he wasn't carrying his hunting licence. And when I questioned the passenger on why he shot at the decoy, he said they'd been driving around all day and hadn't seen many deer. He admitted he saw the "No Hunting" sign, so he knew the land was posted, but decided to shoot anyway. And that, right there, is the type of person we're after—people who don't have respect for landowner rights, and who put everyone's safety at risk.

In the end, those two gentlemen had their firearms seized and they were fined a total of $990. In addition, each man faced a one-year suspension of his hunting licence once the fines were paid. On my way home after dealing with them, I stopped in to talk to the landowner and let him know what had taken place. To say he was happy we caught these guys on his land was an understatement, and it was rewarding to see his appreciation for the work we did.

And that's how the first three days of my 2019 rifle deer season played out. With 15 more days to go, I knew it would be a long haul, and a grind.

Being a CO isn't always glamorous—sometimes you find yourself elbow deep in the rotting carcass of a poached animal looking for a bullet. It isn't always easy, either, especially when you have to tell your young kids that even though Daddy just got home, he has to go right back to work. And it can be tiring, too, especially when you have to get up at all hours of the night to start work or respond to a night-hunting call. But when you catch the bad apples who give all hunters a bad name, it makes it all worth it.

It's a career I wouldn't trade for anything. OC

CURRENTLY STATIONED IN SASKATCHEWAN'S DUCK MOUNTAIN DISTRICT, SHAWN RIABKO HAS SERVED AS A CONSERVATION OFFICER FOR 15 YEARS.

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THE 110 IS A RUGGED, WELL-DESIGNED RIFLE

REVIEW

GOING LONG

SAVAGE'S WELL-PRICED 110 HIGH COUNTRY PROMISES GREAT ACCURACY

BY MARK HOFFMAN

WHEN SAVAGE ARMS added the 110 High Country to its already impressive line-up last year, it made some lofty promises about the rifle: "The biggest bulls. The longest shots. With the new Savage 110 High Country, they're all within your reach." But does it actually live up to the billing? Yes, and then some, starting with the rifle's very design.

The High Country's beefy, medium-contoured, stainless steel barrel and action, as well as all metal components, are coated with coyote-brown PVD (physical vapour deposition). Harder than competitive finishes, the coating protects the components from corrosion and heat, yet doesn't interfere with the rifle's tight tolerances. The finish also adds lubricity to moving parts, such as the bolt.

The spiral fluted barrel and bolt are certainly appealing, and the taper-lock interface muzzle brake on my magnum test rifle added a custom-like finishing touch. My test rifle was also equipped with a detachable metal box magazine, which is a bit of a stalwart throwback these days.

The synthetic stock, with True Timber Strata camo, is an ingenious innovation in its own right. The AccuFit system comes with five different risers to adjust the comb height in ⅛-inch increments, and four inserts to adjust the length of pull from 12.75 to 13.75 inches in ¼-inch increments. This allows the rifle to be customized to fit just about any shooter. As well, the stock incorporates a generously sized rubber recoil pad, as well as rubber inserts in the fore-end and pistol grip.

The High Country also boasts Savage's renowned AccuTrigger. It's adjustable from 1.5 to 4.5 pounds, with an incredible lock time of just two milliseconds. The two-stage design also makes it one of the safest triggers on the market. Rounding things off, the rifle features a three-position safety, and the receiver comes drilled and tapped.

TEST RESULTS

When looking at the various available chamberings for the High County, I opted for the .300 WSM because of its short case and long-range potential. Plus, there's a long list of quality .30-calibre bullets available for this cartridge.

After mounting a Bushnell Forge 3-18x50 scope on my test rifle, I spent a half-hour using the innovative AccuFit system to adjust the length of pull and comb height to my specifications. Once completed, I had a custom fit and perfect eye-scope alignment—what a great system.

Despite the High Country's moniker, I didn't see myself packing it up a mountain, as it weighs in at 8.5 pounds (10 pounds four ounces with scope). That's not to say the rifle doesn't have its place in the hills, especially if four-legged horsepower can eliminate the gut-wrenching climb. And I certainly liked the added weight for the stability it provided when shooting at long range.

As for functionality, the trigger was outstanding with no creep and minimal deviation in pull weights between two pounds 3.8 ounces and two pounds 4.3 ounces. It cycled flawlessly, and the recoil was notably mild thanks to the muzzle brake.

In all, I tested four handloads and 14 factory loads, starting with three-shot groups at 100 yards. Incredibly, 11 out of the 18 shot into 0.75 inches or less. I then moved out to 300 yards with the four loads that shot into less than 0.6 inches. At that range, the groups averaged a remarkably paltry 1.608 inches. Overall, the handloaded 200-grain Hornady ELD X bullets, driven by H414 powder, provided the best overall performance, shooting groups of 0.28 and 1.120 inches respectively at 100 and 300 yards (pictured below). That's superb accuracy, making that load an ideal long-range option for big game such as moose and elk.

While I expected the 110 High Country to shoot well, it exceeded my expectations. And when you consider the cost of specialty long-range rifles these days, your money would be well spent on this accurate, well-designed and rugged rifle—even if it were priced a few C-notes higher than the suggested retail price of US$1,129. OC



THE SPECS

- Calibre: .300 WSM
- Weight: 8.5 lb
- Barrel length: 24"
- Total length: 44.25"
- Rate of twist: 1 in 10"
- Length of pull: Adjustable 12.75" to 13.75"
- Drop at comb: Adjustable
- Magazine capacity: 2

MARK HOFFMAN (HUNTER, TARGET); SAVAGE ARMS (RIFLE)

PLEASE E-MAIL YOUR PHOTOS AND DETAILED QUESTIONS TO EDITORIAL@OUTDOORCANADA.CA. FOR AUCTION HOUSE INFO, PLEASE GO TO WWW.OUTDOORCANADA.CA/GUNAUCTIONS.

EXPERT ADVICE

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

SHOTGUNS, RIFLES, LOADS & MORE

BY DAVE ANDERSON

WHETHER YOU HAVE a question about antique guns, modern firearms, ammunition or reloading, expert Dave Anderson is here with the answer. Please send your detailed questions and applicable photos to editorial@outdoorcanada.ca.



J.E. GAGE BUGGY RIFLE

Q

I HAVE TWO Model 70 Winchester rifles. The rifle on the top is a .220 Swift calibre (serial number 267690), and the other is a .25-06 (serial number G1290641). All I ask is what year was each one made, and what their approximate value would be. Thank you for providing this information. I very much enjoy reading your magazine.

KEN SUTHERLAND
HUMBOLDT, SASKATCHEWAN

A

A total of 19,934 Model 70s were chambered in .220 Swift; yours was made in 1953. The cartridge was considered sensational when it was announced prior to the Second World War, but it earned an undeserved reputation as being tricky to reload and hard on barrels. As a result, sales languished in the 1950s, although part of that was no doubt due to the success of the .222 Rem.

Values on pre-1964 Winchester 70s seem to be evolving. For a long time, any Model 70 would sell because of the action, even if the barrel was rusted out and the stock was broken. Today, there are plenty of very fine actions available for custom rifles. As a result, it seems values are decreasing for run-of-the-mill pre-1964 models in the more common chamberings, such as .30-06 and .270. Interest remains strong, however, for the more unusual cartridges or models, such as Target and Super Grades.

One photo isn't enough to tell much about a rifle's condition, but assuming your .220 Swift is complete and functional, with a decent bore, no broken parts and just normal wear, it should bring in $1,500 to perhaps $2,000 at a Canadian firearms auction. If it's in 90 to 95 per cent of its original condition, perhaps add another $500. Its value would be primarily as a collectible.

As for your .25-06, the records I have indicate it was made in 1977. There is currently no collector interest in this Model 70, although it has value as a well-made sporting rifle. Assuming it's in 90 per cent of its original condition, complete with a good bore, it should be worth $400 to $550. I've owned and used both cartridges, which cover a lot of Canadian hunting opportunities.»



WINCHESTER MODEL 70 RIFLES

Q

I AM INTERESTED in ascertaining the value of this J.E. Gage .32-20 pistol. Your magazine's expertise in this area would be greatly appreciated. I am also interested in any information you may be able to provide regarding trusted gun collectors in my area.

DOANE GREGORY
NORTH VANCOUVER, B.C.

A

This is a very interesting and rare firearm. It was made between 1884 and 1900 by gunmaker James E. Gage, who first learned the trade from William Billinghurst at Rochester, New York. Gage had a patent for a breech-loading design, in which the barrel swivels so the breech end moves to the left.

He later moved to Concord, New Hampshire, and established a business making rifles such as this one, often called buggy or bicycle rifles. They were made in .22 or .32 rimfire, featuring barrel lengths of 15 or 20 inches and a clamp-on shoulder stock. By the time Gage got his rifle into production, however, this type of firearm had largely fallen out of favour, so sales were low.

Unfortunately, I can't find any comparable guns for sale, so estimating a value is almost impossible. Also, there are not many collectors of this type of firearm. On the plus side, they are very well made and rare rifles, and yours appears to be in very good condition. My advice is to sell it through a well-publicized firearm auction, with a reserve amount of approximately $500. I doubt it would get into four figures, but I could be wrong. It's an interesting firearm, and one I'd be glad to own.

Q **I HAVE A** completely original 1910 Mauser 7x57mm sporting rifle (serial number 34894). It has a Lyman peep sight; it was never tapped for a scope mount. I was a police officer for 28 years, and I've never handled a smoother action. It was my father's and my deer rifle, and it's been in our family for 80-plus years. I'm getting old and won't be hunting anymore, and since I have no one to leave the rifle to, I'm selling it and the rest of my collection. It was appraised 25 years ago for insurance purposes at $2,700, but I'd like your opinion on its present-day value. Thank you.

JOHN KEDDY
HAMILTON, ONTARIO

A *Original Mauser sporters are prized both as collectibles and as practical firearms. Many were made to special order at the Mauser factory and by individual gunmakers. Mauser produced some more or less standardized models—the A, B and C versions—but even those often had special order features. Your rifle does not appear to be one of the standard models, though there is some resemblance to the C model. Most likely it was made to order by a custom gunmaker. It appears to be a quality hunting rifle, complete with high-grade wood and excellent workmanship.*

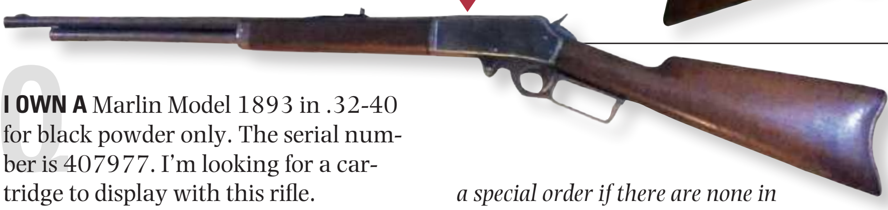
A feature that looks a bit odd to me is the shape at the tip of the forearm. Most Mauser sporters I've seen had either a rounded forearm with a black horn forearm tip, or a Schnabel shape. Perhaps your rifle had a Schnabel tip that was later reshaped, but I could very well be wrong.

The market for fine sporting rifles is going through turbulent times at present. For one thing, many of the admirers and collectors of these firearms are getting old and selling off their collections (or the executors of their estates are selling them). As a result, a gun's condition is becoming more critical to its value. Young shooters and hunters don't seem to care much for walnut and blue steel, preferring instead the utility of synthetics and stainless steel.

The other factor, which I hope is short term, is the tremendous damage done to the economy by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many people are worried about paying rent and mortgages, and are therefore not in the mood to spend on non-essentials. Until the economy turns around, I think it's going to be tough to market collectible firearms. In normal times, your rifle would likely bring in $2,500 or so at an auction, but it may be a long while before normalcy returns.



MAUSER 7X57MM



MARLIN MODEL 1893

Q **I OWN A** Marlin Model 1893 in .32-40 for black powder only. The serial number is 407977. I'm looking for a cartridge to display with this rifle.

BRUCE ZAYONC
WANDERING RIVER, ALBERTA

A *The .32-40 was a fairly popular cartridge, and it can usually be found at gun shows. Winchester made some commemorative boxes of the .32-40 a couple of decades ago, and they seem to show up at gun shows fairly regularly. You could also try Ontario's Ellwood Epps, which can make a special order if there are none in stock (go to www.ellwoodepps.com).*

The Marlin 1893 was produced from 1893 to 1936; yours was likely made around 1907 or 1908. Marlin offered two variations of the rifle. One was marked "Special Smokeless Steel," and it had a case-hardened receiver. The other variation was marked "For Black Powder," and it had a blued receiver; it was also referred to as the Model B.

The Model 1893 is well regarded by collectors, but values vary widely depending on the rifle's condition. Assuming there's no rust, pitting or broken parts, even with 40 per cent of its original finish it would likely bring in $700 to maybe $1,000 at an auction. Double that amount if it's in 70 to 80 per cent of its original condition; at 90 per cent, it could command $3,000-plus. Since your rifle was made for use with black powder, I think you are wise to keep it on display only. It is certainly a fine collectible well worth preserving. OC

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

Holland & Holland is one of the world's great shotgun makers, with offices in London, England, since 1835. New H&H sidelock shotguns are only made by special order, with current prices of more than $100,000. The shotgun pictured here is a vintage H&H that has seen decades of careful use. It's a fairly basic gun with little engraving, and the metal finish is mostly gone. The extended stock also reduces value, but I'd still expect this gun to fetch at least $15,000 at a Canadian auction.



The shooter holding the gun is my friend, outdoor writer Wayne Van Zwoll, with whom I've shared hunting camps in Europe, Africa and the U.S. In 2013, we decided we owed our wives a vacation in return for their patience with our hunting trips, so we travelled to Scotland and saw castles, lakes and all the tourist sites. Wayne and I figured we'd also earned a little treat, so we arranged to hunt red grouse on a Scottish estate on the "Glorious Twelfth," the centuries-old name for the August 12 grouse opener. We were each offered a gun, and since Wayne is four inches taller than me at six-foot-three, he got the H&H with its long stock. I had to "make do" with a Purdey. —**DAVE ANDERSON**



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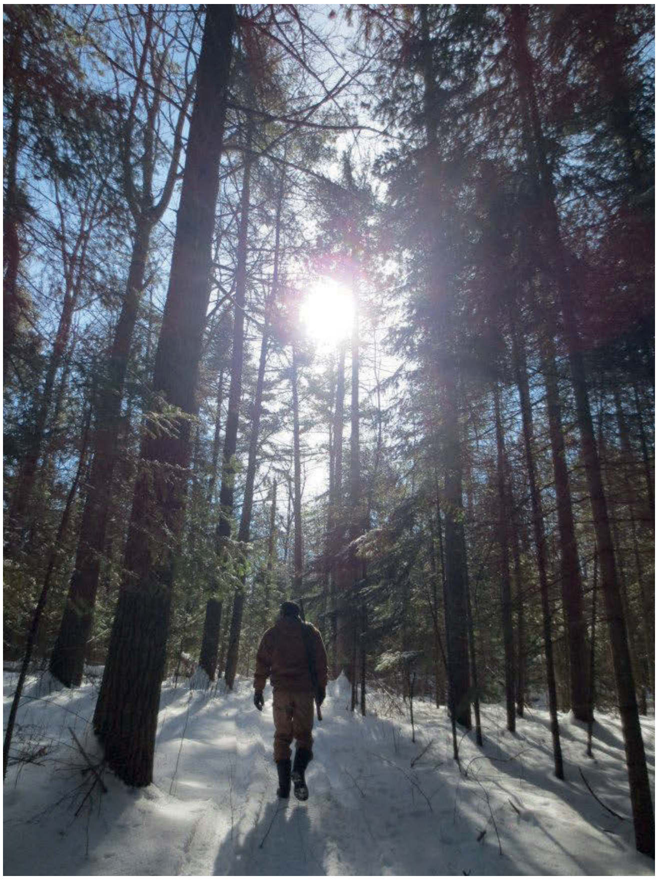
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BY GEORGE GRUENEFELD



The trail home

LEADING THE WAY TO THOUGHTS OF HUNTS PAST AND ADVENTURES YET TO COME

GIVE OR TAKE, it's a good 40-minute jaunt from my snow-dusted hardwood stand to the wood-fire warmth of the hunting cabin. For most of the way, the route follows an old cattle trail, the path of least resistance down through the thick stuff to the old lumber road. From there, it's just a 10-minute hike through the gathering evening darkness and pronounced nip in the autumn air to the cabin doorstep.

There are whitetails enough on the bench where I hunt, but I've held off all through October and the better part of November. Now, with barely one day left to my credit, the odds of tagging the bruiser that holds sway up there are looking slim. It might be smart to focus on a meat buck tomorrow, rather than chasing that will-o'-the-wisp around on its home turf one last time. But instead, I know I'll be back up on the bench come sunrise, waiting for my buck to come ghosting around.

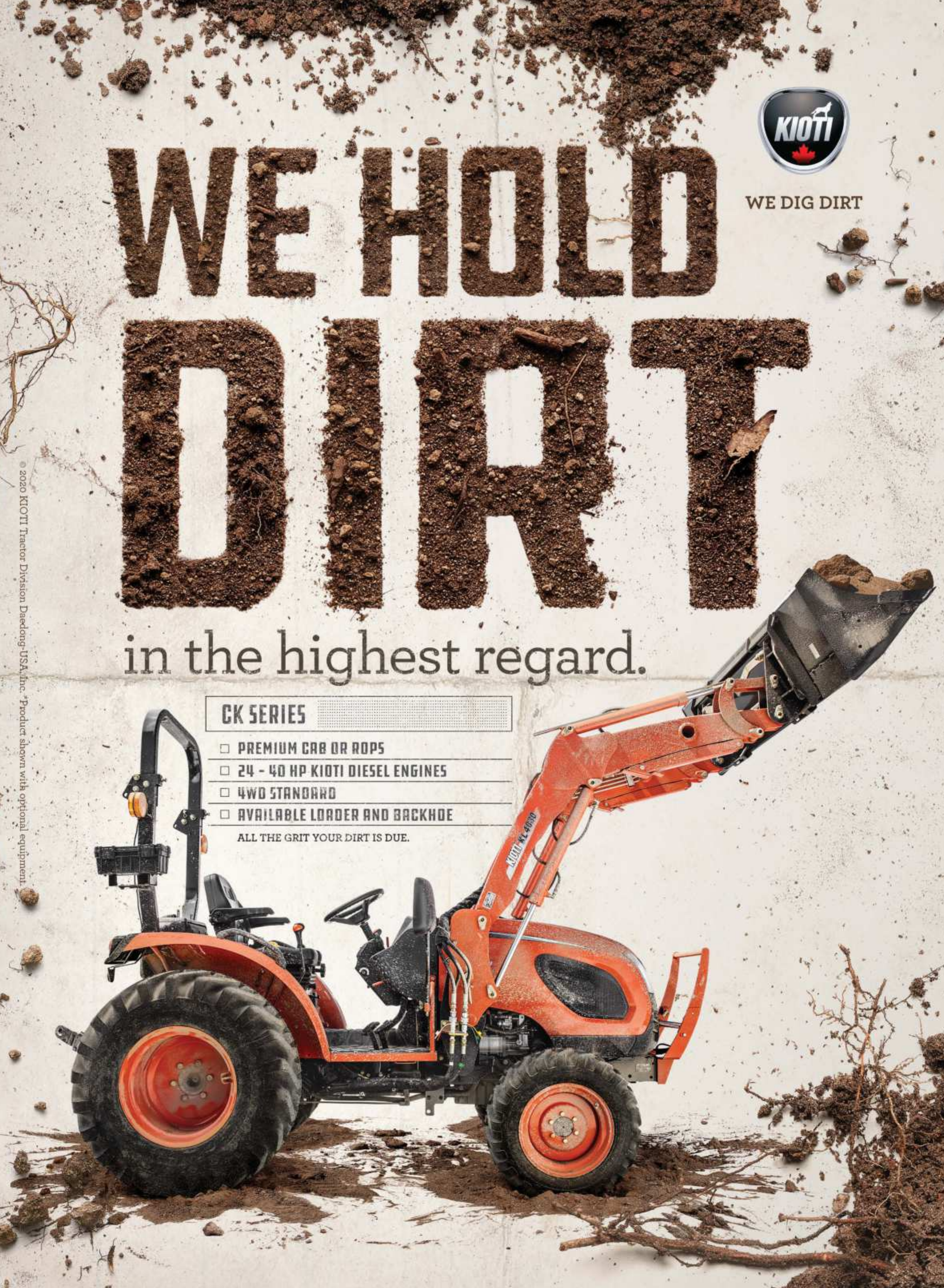
In the meantime, there's every chance we'll be feasting on fresh deer liver and onions for supper tonight, judging by that single mid-morning shot I heard to the east. My hunting buddy Charley favours his treestands on that distant hillside, and he rarely touches the trigger unless he's rock-steady on his target. It's a good area for morning hunts in the late rut, too, since the does gather there to soak in the first slanted shafts of sunshine.

Hitting the lumber road, my pace becomes more hurried. The walking is easier, but I'm also eager to learn how Charley made out. If he was successful, it's likely his son, who chose a stand in the same sector, has already helped him haul the deer down to camp. Rounding the last bend, I see the light of the cabin and the shape of a deer suspended from the meat pole. A buck. A fine whitetail buck. At the end of the trail home. OC

KAMLOOPS, B.C., CONTRIBUTOR GEORGE GRUENEFELD LOOKS FORWARD TO HITTING THE TRAIL EVERY DEER SEASON.

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